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THE WISE MEN:

Who they were;

AND

How they came to Jerusalem.

BY

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Behold, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his Star.

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THE WISE MEN.

CHAPTER I.

WHO WERE THE WISE MEN?

THERE is a spirit that believes, and yet inquires. In this spirit let us inquire, Who were those Pilgrims, who, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his Star in the East? And how were they moved by a Star to undertake their long pilgrimage? — a pilgrimage no less instructive, if its causes were better understood.

St. Matthew calls them Magi.[1] The English translation of the Bible, by substituting for this title Wise Men, leaves their secret untold. For by their title St. Matthew tells who those strangers were.

If, in some historical memoir, we find it written, that in the reign of George III. there came to London, Brahmins, — we know their country and their character; we know they were natives of India, and of

[1] The Vulgate wisely keeps the word.

its sacred caste; know their complexion, dress, and manners, their religious opinions and customs. Of such effect is St. Matthew's note of the pilgrims to the Holy City.

He opens their story with a brief introduction, where one great fact — even the birth of Jesus — is stated in fewest words, where some historical and geographical knowledge is taken for granted; and it is in keeping that in this, his description of the strangers is by their title, only. This, too, is brief; but portraiture in the flowing style of romance, or with the minuteness of a child's history book, would be out of place in a gospel. A title is, more or less, a description. To call men Mandarins, is to describe them; and thus the title Magi here stands for pages, in more diffuse and less suggestive writers; for when St. Matthew calls these foreigners Magi, he tells their nation, and their character. Their title introduces them as Persians of the sacred or priestly order of Persia.

In the first Christian century, the title Magi, in its oldest sense, was thus distinctive and honorable. But, besides this, in the Roman Empire the word had another meaning. This was, in part, consequent upon historical changes running through several centuries; but these may be stated in a few words. Before the rise of the Roman power, in the days of the old Persian Empire (B. C. 558–331), the Greeks knew the Magi well, as the imperial priesthood of what was then the great Empire of the earth. After that Empire was destroyed by Alexander the Great, they continued

to know them well, so long as they themselves ruled over Persia. This lasted but about a century; and, like the English in India, the Greeks in Persia attempted no radical changes in religion. Like the English in India, the Greeks in Persia were an army of occupation, ruling through great families and tribes, and disturbing as little as might be social and religious institutions. Hence, relatively to the Persian people, the Magi, under the Greek rule, were much as they were before — as now the Brahmins in India under British rule; and they were so under the subsequent Parthian rule in Persia, that began about one hundred and fifty years before the Christian era, and lasted for a little more than two hundred years after it. Under the Parthians, as under the Greeks, the Magi were degraded from that high, preëminent place, conspicuous throughout the world, which they held in the old Persian Empire; yet they must have been treated with consideration by the Parthian dynasty, for otherwise it could not have retained its power so long. This also appears from the fact, that when the Persians regained their independence (A. D. 226), the Magi, strong in numbers and in the veneration of their countrymen, at once took the same place in the later Persian Kingdom they held in the old Persian Empire. The Magi, then, were really the sacerdotal order in Persia from the fall of its Empire (B. C. 331) onward to and after the Christian era.

But this was not well known in the Roman Empire, within which Persia was never included. The Par-

thians were jealous, and their realm was almost impenetrable by foreigners. For more than a century before the Christian era, the world beyond the Tigris was ever becoming less known to the Greeks; and it was never well known to the Romans. Incessant war restricted their armies to the Euphrates, or to the Tigris. Their legions never climbed the mountain ranges that defend the western frontier of Persia. From the heights of the Zagros, the Roman Eagles never looked eastward over the old Persian realm. A cloud of Parthian arrows hid Iran from the West. Hence, in the time of the Parthians, there could have been but little popular knowledge of the internal polity of Persia among the Greeks or the Romans;[1] and by

[1] How ignorant even a learned Roman might be, on such subjects, comes out in the strange fables Tacitus recites as to the origin, morals, and usages of the Jews, — as when he says their rites were impure, and that an image of an ass was set up in the Temple. Hist., lib. v. 2–5. Yet the Hebrew Scriptures were accessible to him in a Greek translation, and he was narrating one of the greatest events of his time — a war with the Jews, memorable even in the annals of Rome. If such was the ignorance of this historian as to this Eastern people, whose territory had been a part of the Empire for four generations, what may not be presumed to have been the popular ignorance of the internal polity of a people much farther eastward, and on whose original territory no Roman soldier ever set foot.

Diodorus Siculus, a Greek of the time of Cæsar Augustus, who used diligence and travelled far to collect a mass of materials for a Universal History, in a fragment of its 34th Book, shows a like strange ignorance of the morals and usages of the Jews.

them the Magi almost wholly ceased to be known as an existing priesthood.

In the Roman World it was the common opinion, that, in very ancient times, magic originated with the priests of the Persians;[1] and in the Roman World, those who practised magic assumed the name of Magi; the adepts in the black arts shrewdly seeking to impress the popular imagination by taking to themselves the countenance of the name of an order, that, at the height of its glory, but in a time long past, had been widely honored.[2] Thus, in the two prevailing languages of the Roman Empire, in the Greek, the language of letters, and in the Latin, the language of the laws, the word Magi came into common use in a sense that was related to the distinctive name of the Persian priest-

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There were Greek colonies that long held their own beyond the Euphrates, in the time of the Parthians, but their relations with Greece were very different from those of the Jews of those regions with Judea. They were estranged from their kinsmen in Greece by the time of several generations, as well as by a very great distance, and there could have been but very little intercourse between them.

[1] More exactly — with Zoroaster, the reputed founder of the Persian religion. Of him Justin says, lib. 1, sec. 1, "Dicitur artes magicas invenisse" — He is said to have found out magic. Pliny says the same. See hereafter, page 101.

[2] For the popular Latin use of the term, see Tacitus, Annals, ii. 27–31, for an abstract of which, see, hereafter, p. 12; xii. 22, where an Empress, on the charge of interrogating Magi, and other misdeeds, was banished, unheard, by the Senate; vi. 29; xii. 59.

hood, much as the English word magician is. The new sense of the word differed, in all important respects, from its original meaning. It indicated no priestly function, no sacredness of character, little or nothing as to nationality; and the term that best represents it is, sorcerer.[1] Those whom the word in its new sense designated, were numerous in the old heathen Empire of Rome, especially in the Eastern Provinces, and in the Capital. They were persons of impure lives and criminal practices. Such were the Magi, popularly known to the Romans and to the later Greeks of the West, whose writers had little occasion to use the term, save in this sense.

This popular evil sense of the term is sharply felt in the words that Arnobius,[2] a Christian writer (A. D. 303), puts into the mouth of a heathen, who scornfully says of Christ, so like what the Jews said to Him, "A Magus was He; He did all things through unlawful arts." St. Jerome,[3] near the close of the fourth century, says, "Common custom and common speech treat the Magi as malefactors." And most of the fathers, very naturally, attached to the word in St. Matthew the significance it had in the world around them.[4] Living in the

[1] It is thus rendered in the English Bible. Acts xiii. 6. 8.

[2] Adversus Gentes, lib. iii. sec. 43: "Magus fuit: clandestinis artibus omnia illa perfecit."

[3] Dan. ii. "Consuetudo et sermo communis Magos pro maleficis accepit;" but in the same place he refers to the use of the word in a better sense.

[4] St. Ignatius, near the end of the second century, Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. iv. 13, says, "By the Star all

midst of an encompassing blackness of heathenism, and abhorring the sight of its dark and cruel rites, they were readily inclined to see in the pilgrimage to Bethlehem the triumph of the Kingdom of Light over the foul superstitions and black arts of the Kingdom of Darkness — an idea in which there unquestionably was an element of truth, but carried to the extreme, in consequence of their confounding those Magi with the sorcerers of the guilty heathen world around them.

Thus, alike from heathen and from Christian writers, the term Magi, in this sense, was handed down to the ecclesiastical schools of the Dark and of the Middle Ages.[1]

That such was its meaning in St. Matthew, was also authoritatively suggested, and seemingly confirmed, by the fact that St. Luke used the term in its later significance. Thus various causes long combined to determine the meaning of the word in St. Matthew to this sense.

Such having been the causes of this ancient and abiding interpretation, we need not be surprised at its existence, or at its continuance. Perhaps the discernment that there must be in it somewhat of error, which

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magic art was dissolved, and every bond of wickedness disappeared." St. Augustine (Serm. 200), referring to the Magi who came to Bethlehem, says, "Prævalet — impietas in sacrilegiis Magorum;" which may be freely translated as, — Impiety characterized the sacrilegious rites of the Magi.

[1] Abelard, in the twelfth century, says: Is there indeed one

appears in the English version, and in various ways in modern comment, is the more surprising; for this modern divergence from the old interpretation does not justify itself by going far enough in the right direction to reach any solid ground to stand upon.

It still remains to prove, — what, as yet, I have but asserted, — if proved it can be, that the ancient opinion as to the significance of the word in St. Matthew is wrong, and that he used it in its original sense. If this can be done, the nationality of the pilgrims is known, and there is some hope of throwing clear historical light on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The fact that St. Luke used the term in its later sense, seems a strong argument against this; and it is a correct general principle, that, if one Evangelist uses a word in a certain sense, it is to be presumed that another Evangelist uses it in the same. But the word in question is not of those religious terms that have one unvarying significance. It is a descriptive, historical epithet, which has two meanings, that are quite distinct;[1] and St. Luke may have used it in one, and St.

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who is ignorant that the Magi are so detestable that by law not only they, but all who incline towards them, are put to death? Quis enim Magos in tantum detestandos esse ignoret, ut non solum ipsos, sed etiam quemlibet ad eos declinantem, lex interfici jubeat? — In Epiph. Dom. Serm. 4.

[1] Some surmise that the good character of the word Magi, as that of some other words has done, ran down into a bad one, and that, in St. Matthew's time, it was in a state of transition; others, that it was then a general name for men of science; and, that so, perchance, the Evangelist

Matthew in the other. St. Luke, though born in Syria, was probably a Greek. He was a man of letters, and had travelled far and wide in the West. In the Acts of the Apostles he addressed the Roman World, and naturally used this word in its common Roman sense. St. Matthew, a Hebrew of Galilee, on the eastern edge of the Empire, who, probably, had not been out of Palestine, and who wrote with immediate reference to his countrymen, may as naturally have used this word in its Persian meaning, which we shall find reason to think was its common meaning with the Jews of Palestine. Besides this, the facts are these: to a sorcerer

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did not use it in an evil sense. These are only surmises. Others surmise that he added to it "from the East," to avoid the evil sense in the word. This phrase, as will be shown in Chapter II., is one of the proofs that he used it in its Persian sense.

The critical insight of the modern age sees that the interpretation by former ages of the term Magi is not in harmony with the spirit of the narrative. Yet the almost unanimous voice of its comment is, that who they were that came to Jerusalem, or whence they came, cannot be determined. It is not worth while even to make a selection from the interminable list of those whose writings prove this, or to attempt to specify the few partial exceptions. One very brief citation sums up too general a feeling — "It matters little who they were." But it is fair to suppose that those who have tried to expound even one book of Scripture have found the field too extensive to allow of the patient research required for the solution of these questions, and, without much thought about the matter, have had to be content to echo on the current opinion, which, on the face of it, seemed probably correct.

St. Luke applies the term; but, as if aware that the word might have a national sense, he adds, the man was a Jew, and, as if aware that it might have an honorable sense, that he was a false prophet.[1]

St. Luke's use of the term, then, does not decide that St. Matthew did not use it in its national sense; and that he did can be decisively proved.

The presumption is very strong, that the term Magi is used in its Persian sense, when, in the first century, a Hebrew writes to Hebrews of Palestine. They were much nearer to the Persians than were the Romans, or the Greeks. In a former day, the Persians had delivered them from bondage and exile — a deliverance recorded in their sacred books, and commemorated by a yearly festival.[2] Their acquaintance with the Persians, thus begun, was never afterwards wholly discontinued.

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[1] Acts xiii. 6. "They found a certain Magus," — English translation "sorcerer." Here he guards his use of the word as stated above. He uses it the second time in verse 8, where he explains that it is his translation of the Arabic word Elymas, a name commonly given the man, or assumed by him; and said to be expressive of wisdom, as the English word wizard (wise-ard), etymologically considered, is also said to be. So, too, the idea of wisdom in a dark and evil sense, attached to the later meaning of the title Magus. In speaking of Simon the Wizard (Acts viii. 9–11), St. Luke uses terms related to the word Magus in its evil sense, though he does not give him the title.

[2] The feast of Purim commemorated the deliverance recorded in the Book of Esther; but, as the Passover recalled all the relations of the Hebrews with Egypt, so the Purim all their relations with Persia.

The Parthian jealousy of strangers did not exclude from Persia the Jews, settled there before their rule began, — of whom were the Parthians and Medes, who came to the Pentecost. There were great numbers of Hebrews in Babylonia, which adjoined Persia, and was then a province of the Parthian empire; and those eastern Jews kept up with their kinsmen in Palestine an annual intercourse, fostered by commerce and religion. Thus the Hebrews in Palestine, then, had much the same knowledge of the Persians as those earlier Greeks had, — Herodotus and Xenophon, for example, — who used the term Magi only in its national sense.[1]

St. Matthew had been an officer of the customs in a town situated on "the way of the sea"[2] of Galilee, one of the roads over which the trade of Persia reached the Mediterranean. Himself the earliest of the Evangelists, he gave the title Magi to men who lived in the generation before him. If he had not used this title in its Persian sense, he would have said so, or it would be implied, or be plain from the context.

In its popular sense in the Roman empire, the term was dishonorable. St. Matthew uses it in no such way.

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[1] The word is used as a term of reproach by Sophocles, who died B. C. 405. It is applied by him to a Greek soothsayer, as an epithet of anger, the use of which is to be traced to the feeling of bitterness towards the Persians, growing out of their wars against the Greeks. — Œdipus Tyrannus, 387.

[2] Isaiah ix. 1; Matt. iv. 15.

The English version substitutes for it the honorable term "Wise Men." This agrees with the tenor of the narrative. In the brief style of St. Matthew, everything is significant. The impression given by this great master of history, is the very truth he designed to give. His emphatic "Behold! there came," the sensation it made, and all else, give the impression, that the coming of these pilgrims was honorable to the Lord. Can he, then, at the very outset, have given them a bad name? Can he have pointed them out as of the crew of jugglers, fortune-tellers, charmers, diviners, who, throughout the Roman World, assumed the ancient name of the priests of Persia but to disgrace it; who professed to invoke demons, to call out responses from the dead; who joined to the practice of the black art the craft of poisoners, and pandered to the fiercest and the lowest passions of those two great classes — the credulous and the corrupt; impostors of a vile and dangerous kind, not less detested in Antioch, in Alexandria, or in Jerusalem, than when in Rome, calling themselves by a once untarnished name, these unhallowed wretches drew down upon them the vengeance of the laws?

To prove that I have correctly stated the character and reputation of this class of persons, I call two witnesses of the time — Tacitus and Philo Judæus. There is a story told by the Latin historian that well illustrates the Latin use of the term Magi, and the character of that class of persons who were called so in Rome. For Tacitus, the story is very fully told; and I abbreviate the facts of a writer whose words it

is not possible to condense. A Senator of Rome, who plied the trade of an informer, coveted the estates of of Libo, a rich young nobleman, related to the family of Augustus Cæsar; and, seeing that he was weakly credulous and rashly ambitious, he allured him to the predictions of the Chaldeans, and *Magorum sacra*, — the mysterious rites of the Magi. His slaves were bribed to watch him, and — *ut infernas umbras carminibus eliceret*, as he was about to invoke the dead — he was arrested and hurried before the Senate, where the Emperor Tiberius presided in person.[1] The unfinished trial was adjourned over, and that night Libo took his own life. But the prosecution did not stop with his death. His estates were divided among the informers, and two of his accomplices in unhallowed practices were executed. One was thrown down the Tarpeian Rock, the other was scourged to death. The Senate then (A. D. 16) passed a decree — *De Mathematicis Magisque* — concerning the Mathematici[2] and the Magi, banishing them from Italy. The weight of this piece of evidence is not in the use of the word Magi by Tacitus, but in its use in this decree of the Roman Senate. There can be no better testimony as

[1] Through the evidence of his dealing in magic arts, the suspicion of a wish to conspire against Tiberius was insinuated. In this was the venom of the accusation. The scene reminds a little of Scene iv. Act 3, Richard III.

[2] These were astrologers, often called Chaldeans. Aulus Gellius, i. 9, says, "Vulgus, quos gentilitio vocabulo Chaldæos dicere oportet Mathematicos dicit," — Those who ought to be called Chaldeans the people call Mathematici.

to the Latin use of the term Magi, than the testimony of the Senators of Rome embodied in this law, and this law goes far to determine the character and reputation of these Magi, not only in Italy, but throughout the Roman World.

The testimony of Philo supplements this, where it is deficient on the last point; and is even more important than that which Tacitus preserves, as it differentiates these Magi from the Magi of Persia. Philo, called Judæus, was a learned Jew, of a noble family, who lived at Alexandria in Egypt, one of the great seats of Jewish learning. He was the chief of an embassy, sent by his countrymen in Judea to the Emperor Caligula, at Rome; and his son married Berenice, a daughter of King Agrippa. The year of his birth, and the year of his death, are unknown; but he lived in the time of Christ; for he was a vigorous old man about the year 41. He wrote in Greek, and most of his voluminous writings are extant. Providentially there is in them a passage, that enables us to understand the self-styled Magi, and to compare them with those whose name they assumed. To receive its full force, we must consider it in its connection. Philo treats of the law concerning murder, as laid down by Moses, — explaining and justifying it. After a page or two on the crime of murder, he says, that Moses commands that poisoners and magicians [1] should not be allowed to live one day,

[1] *οἱ μάγοι καὶ φαρμακευταί.* These *πονηρότατοι*, persons of the greatest wickedness, form with him but one class in fact.

or even one hour;[1] and then to give a clear idea of the class of persons whom the Mosaic law was so swift to punish, he describes, as just like them, a class of magicians of his own time; but first, he carefully distinguishes their magic, from magic of quite another sort. He says, "The true magical art, being a science that contemplates and beholds the books of nature with more acute and clear perception than usual; and appearing to be a dignified and desirable branch of knowl-

[1] These are laws that Philo seems to refer to. I give them from the Greek translation, known as that of the LXX, or the Septuagint, which Philo used. The reader can readily compare them with the English version, Deuteronomy xviii. 9–14. "When thou shalt have entered into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found in thee one . . . who uses divination, who deals with omens, and augury; one who has in him a divining spirit, an observer of signs, questioning the dead. For every one that does these things is an abomination to the Lord thy God; for because of these abominations the Lord will destroy them from before thy face."

Leviticus xix. 30–31. Ye shall keep my Sabbath, and reverence my sanctuaries; I am the Lord. Ye shall not attend to those who have in them divining spirits, nor attach yourselves to enchanters, to pollute yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God. xx. 6. The soul that shall follow those who have in them divining spirits, or enchanters, I will set my face against that soul, and will destroy it from among the people. Exodus xxii. 18. Ye shall not save the lives of socerers. Leviticus xx. 27. As for a man or woman, whosoever of them shall have in them a divining spirit, or be an enchanter, let them both die the death. Ye shall stone them with stones: they are guilty."

edge, is studied by kings, and the greatest of kings, and especially by the Persian Monarchs; and they say, among that people, no one can possibly succeed to the kingdom, if he had not been previously initiated into the mysteries of the Magi."[1]

Philo's testimony to the worth of the science of the true Magi, as a kind of natural philosophy, is important; and still more so his recognition of the order, as then existing in Persia, and intrusted with the education of its Monarch. In continuation of the passage cited above, Philo goes on to say: "But there is a certain adulterous species of this science, more properly called wicked imposture, which quacks, and cheats, and buffoons pursue, and the vilest of women and slaves. Professing to understand all kinds of incantations and purifications, and promising to change the dispositions of those on whom they operate, so as to turn those who love to unalterable enmity, and those who hate to the most excessive affection, by certain charms and incan-

[1] In what he says here, there seems to be something of Oriental extravagance. By kings, he may have meant those petty princes, of whom there were so many throughout Asia; as in Palestine, for instance, Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, whose Court was at Tiberias, and Philip, whose Court was but a few miles off, at Cæsarea Philippi. For Persian, must be understood Parthian, and by the greatest of Kings, Parthian Monarchs. The legend on some of the coins of the Parthian Kings in the British Museum is King of Kings. Apart from this testimony of Philo, it is very probable in itself, that the Parthian Princes, like their Persian predecessors, were educated by the Magi.

tations, they deceive and gain influence over men of unsuspicious and innocent dispositions, and so they fall into the greatest calamities. I imagine that the Lawgiver, having in mind such things, would not suffer the punishment due to poisoners to be postponed."

Then, having illustrated the law, and having justified its swiftness, by pointing out, in his own day, a class of persons resembling that against which Moses proceeded with sudden severity, he ends with this venomous comparison: "If we only see snakes or other venomous animals, we kill them without a moment's delay, before they can bite, or wound, or attack us at all; taking care not to expose ourselves to any injury from them, by reason of our knowledge of the mischief inherent in them; in like manner, it is right promptly to punish these men, who, of deliberate purpose, change their nature into the ferocity of untamable beasts, and look on the doing injury to as many people as they can, to be their greatest pleasure."[1]

As we reflect upon this chapter, written by a Hebrew, near the time St. Matthew wrote, and mark the magicians he thinks worthy of instant death, while he commends the Persian Magi, can we doubt to which of

[1] In the Greek and in the Latin there is no single passage more important than this of Philo, On Special Laws, Sects. 17–18, in determining how St. Matthew used the title Magi. I do not know that its bearing on this question has been noted before. This is not so strange as it might seem. The voluminous writings of Philo are so exclusively allegorical, mystical, and didactic, that there seems to be nothing else

these two classes St. Matthew would have us think the pilgrims to Jerusalem belonged?

Such unhonored Magi as Philo describes would no where have received the honors these pilgrims received in Jerusalem. Such wandering Magi, telling the tale they told in Jerusalem, would have been strangled by order of Herod, without formality or delay. St. Matthew, then, must have used the title in an honorable sense; and, if so, then in its national sense; for it is not possible to separate the two.

That St. Matthew did use the title Magi in its honorable, national sense, is established beyond all doubt by King Herod's reception of these foreigners. This old, suspicious politician, half crazy, and half dead, admitted these strangers to private audience; and, for them he summoned together the Sanhedrim, the grand council of his kingdom. These Magi, then, must have been nobles — and this might almost be presumed from the costly presents they offered to the King in Bethlehem — nobles, that is, in the Oriental sense of the term, nobility, — persons in royal service, familiar with dignitaries, men of high consideration. In Persia, at the Court of the Parthian kings, the chief Magi were so,

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in them at all: and there is very little. So that few have searched them through for the grain or two of historic gold that might be hidden in the mass; and, perhaps, no one before having in mind the first verse of the second chapter of St. Matthew.

Philo is the most redundant of writers. I therefore abridge what I quote from him, by leaving out needless repetitions.

and there only. Their standing thus with the Parthians, who were then, next to the Romans, the haughtiest military power in the world, is the only possible historical explanation of Herod's reception of these foreigners. Age, infirmities, and the long exercise of despotic power, had exasperated his naturally strong will and high spirit into a moody, ungovernable temper, that was jealous, suspicious, and irritable, almost, if not, at times, quite to madness; and the Magi, making the inquiry they did, were in greater danger from it than probably they were aware of: but they were comparatively safe, if they came under the safe-conduct of generals commanding the Parthian armies on the Tigris or the Euphrates; not even the Romans, being more feared by Herod than the Parthians, who, in a raid into Judea, had once driven him from his Capital, in such despair, that he attempted to take his own life.[1]

No writer stamps on the soul a more clear and deep impression of the reality of what he describes than St. Matthew; yet in his way of doing it, he is by no means so circumstantial as St. Mark; and for him, his narrative of this pilgrimage is uncommonly full and minute. The number and character of the facts stated in it, show that his knowledge of these Persians was very complete. Thus, he gives their feelings at one interesting moment, the manner of King Herod in their private audience; he names the gifts they offered, and he recites their words. It is natural to think that he who knows so much else about them, must have known

[1] Josephus, Antiq., lib. xiv. chap. xiii. 7, 8.

to what country they belonged. It is hardly credible he should not have known this, when, scarce fifty years before, all Jerusalem had known so well who those princely foreigners were, to answer whose inquiry, its haughty king Herod, summoned the council of his realm, its nobles, scholars, and priests. If he had not known who they were, he would have said so. If he did know who they were, he would tell this. If he styles them Magi in the national sense of this title, he does tell this exactly; and in a brief, yet satisfactory way, that is just like himself.

That St. Matthew did know the country of the pilgrims, is certain from his last words about them, — "they did not return to Herod, but departed into their own country another way:" — not the usual road to Persia through Damascus, but probably some southern way from the not far distant city of Petra. If their historian had not known their country, he would have said, "they did not return to Herod, but departed from his kingdom." The phrase he uses, closing, as it does, the history of the Wise Men, implies that he knew their route to Jerusalem, and knew they went home by another; that he knew their country, and had said what country it was.

There is other evidence of it to be stated hereafter; but the evidence already adduced is sufficient to prove, that when St. Matthew styled the pilgrims to the Holy City Magi, he meant to say, and did say, they were Persians of the priestly order of Persia.

ARMENIA
Ararat
CASPIAN SEA
Tigris
Nineveh
PERSIA OR THE FAR EAST
Euphrates
MESOPOTAMIA
Zagros Mts.
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
SYRIA
Syrian Desert
Damascus
Jordan
Jerusalem
M. Wall
BABYLONIA OR THE EAST
Seleucia
Babylon
ARABIA
EGYPT
Nile
Sinai
RED SEA
PERSIAN GULF
30
35
40
45
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35
35
30
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CHAPTER II.

MEANING OF "THE EAST."

St. Matthew defined his use of the word Magi, by adding to it, "from the Far East." But the same ill fortune has followed both title and phrase. The geographical, like the historical term, is commonly thought to be general and vague; yet the national sense of the one has been, and it may be that the definite meaning of the other can be, proved.

In the Latin and in the English Versions, it is said the Magi were "from the East," and in the same sentence it is said they saw the Star "in the East." In this there seems to be somewhat of needless repetition. This is not so in the original Greek. The word for the East is twice there, but the second time its form is changed, and this change in its form changes its sense. When used together geographically, the first of these two forms must point to some country more distant than the second does; and the one should be translated the Far East, the other the East. Therefore, in English, the verses should run thus: "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came to Jerusalem, Magi from the Far East, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?

for we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."[1]

"The East," and the "Far East," then, are St. Matthew's terms; and cannot geography and history, interrogated together, answer the question, What did the East and the Far East mean, in the first century, in Palestine? They can; and their answers are additional proof that the Wise Men were Persians — a fact so important as to justify all patience in trying to establish it. They also tell where the Wise Men were when

[1] *ΤΟΥ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν βηθλεὲμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλεως, ἰδοὺ, Μάγοι ἀπὸ Ἀνατολῶν παρέγενοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα λέγοντες. Ποῦ ἐστιν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ἴδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ Ἀνατολῇ, καὶ ἤλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ.*

Anatole, which literally means the rising, as of the sun, is the common Greek word for the Eastern quarter of the world, whether of the earth or of the heavens. In classical Greek it is used in this sense only in the plural, and without the article. This is the first form of the word in Matt. ii. 1, 2, twice rendered, in the Latin and in the English Version, the East. When used in the original the second time the word is in the singular, and has the definite article. This statement is sufficient to show, even to those familiar only with the English language, that, as here used in a geographical sense, and used together, the last form of the word must have the more restricted significance, and that they should be translated the Far East, and the East. The Greek word is here exactly conformed — as I suppose, by a local usage peculiar to the Hebraized, colloquial Greek of the Jews of Judea — to the two Hebrew words *Mizrach* and *Kedem;* which, when used together in a geographical sense, have just these meanings. For a more full examination of this usage, see Appendix, I.

they saw the Star — a new fact, that throws some light on the hitherto unknown of their pilgrimage.

It is true, that European scholars have trusted so confidently to the feeling that St. Matthew's words, on the face of them, are vague, that they have not seriously set themselves to consider whether the fact might not be otherwise. But, of this, there seems to be an explanation. The geographical use of the phrases the East, the West, the North, and the South, is especially Asiatic and American; that is, the vast areas of those two continents, and the monotony of their geographical features, fitting them for dominions more extensive than those of the smaller area of Europe, diversified, as it is, by seas and gulfs and mountains, compel in them a resort to these terms, used in a geographical sense.[1] In European kingdoms, where they are less needed, and seldom heard, it may seem they can have no well-established, exact, geographical significance; but their daily and hourly use in the United States so proves they can, and so elucidates the use of St. Matthew's terms, that some reference to it is a fitting preface to an inquiry into their true meaning.

These phrases are very sure to come into use, as names for great areas, distinguished by few natural or

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[1] Thus, "the Persian word *Room*, — the West, — may always be considered as a general or indefinite name, by which Persian authors describe the provinces west of the Euphrates, to the shores of the Euxine and the Mediterranean." — History of Persia by Sir John Malcolm, Minister to the Court of Persia. London, 1815, vol. i. ch. iv. p. 56, n.

civic features. Thus they are applied to unsettled prairies, or the wilderness, where territorial lines are not fixed by ranges of hills or the course of streams, but are run with compass and chain. As the territory they designate becomes settled, and the region beyond is better known, they journey on with the pioneers. In less than a hundred years the West has migrated from Western New York to Michigan, to Illinois, to Wisconsin; and, while the West has been the settled country, the Far West, ever moving on, has marked the parts beyond.

These phrases are apt to become popular names for large regions having many subdivisions, as seen in the phrase — "the South." Usually they point out some locality more remote than that adjoining the one in which they are used. They exclude, as well as include. The West and the Far West do not cross the Rocky Mountains. California and Oregon are known by their proper names.

The locality they describe need not be exactly in the line the word points out. In the same place their meaning often differs in different periods of time; and it differs in places not very remote. In the city of New York, the East means the eastern part of New England. In Boston and its vicinity "Down East" is the familiar, colloquial name for the State of Maine; yet east of Massachusetts is the ocean, and Maine, with its vast area of thirty thousand square miles, lies to the northeast. As the road from Judea to the East at first ran due north, shunning the Desert on its right, so does the road from Massachusetts to the East, avoiding the sea.

It traverses part of the State of New Hampshire; but to this, the name of the East is never given; and the name never crosses the line of the British Provinces, eastward of Maine. Throughout a territory large as that of Judea, and containing as large a population, it is the local, idiomatic, common name for a restricted, definite, yet extensive region; and, in this, it is precisely like St. Matthew's term — the East.

These are phrases of the air, rather than of the earth; yet they are ever used much in the same way. Once the East of the Romans was Asia Minor, with its many provinces. As their dominion widened, it journeyed with it. In the Augustan age, the East was used in a restricted, definite sense, as the Latin name for Syria. Then it came to point, at times, to Parthia; but, unless the known world to the eastward was manifestly meant, it excluded India; and the countries it denoted, at different times, all lay to the south-east of Rome.

As bearing on the Hebraic use of such phrases, the main fact noted is this: — though in the same place their meaning may differ in different periods, they may have as definite a geographical meaning as any names can have, and, when we put ourselves in the circumstances of those using them, their use seems natural, their meaning sure. The conclusion, then, is, that St. Matthew's terms can have a restricted, definite geographical meaning.

That they do not, is a notion upheld by the conjecture, that he chose a term which left the country of the pilgrims in doubt, because he did not know what country it was.

But the conjecture, here, should be the exact opposite of this; for, most assuredly, the fact, supposed unknown to St. Matthew, was, at the time of the pilgrimage, so well known to all Jerusalem, it was a fact of so much interest, so easy to remember and so hard to forget, that there is every reason to think it must have been a part of the history, from whatever source it came to the Evangelist.

More than this. To be complete, this explanation of St. Matthew's terms must include the words he puts into the lips of the Magi; but, then, part of their language becomes inexplicable. They say, the Star was seen by them when they were in the East. Now, they could not have forgotten where they first saw the Star, and it is not possible to give any reason why they should have wished to conceal this in vague language. In what particular city, or town, or village they were, when the Star first shone, was of no consequence. If they stated this, it may not have reached their historian, or might not reappear in his condensed statement; but the name they gave to the country where they were when they saw it — assuredly, this was a definite name.

At the outset in this inquiry, then, these facts are established; — the two Geographical terms in the narrative may have a restricted, definite meaning — one, probably, the other, certainly, has; and it will hereafter appear, that, if the meaning of the latter is determined, the meaning of the former at once becomes definite and clear.

St. Matthew's words are of the place; and he who

would know what they mean, must look for the East and the Far East with the eye of a Hebrew in Palestine. The country east of Palestine lies more than a thousand leagues away; but its great features are so simple and unvarying in their vastness, that it is possible to bring them before the mind's eye, with a clearness sufficient for this purpose, even without the aid of the map. Beyond the Jordan there is a high ridge of land that forms the purple background of every eastern prospect from Jerusalem, and, indeed, from all of Western Palestine.[1] Everywhere of much the same height, running north and south, parallel with the Jordan and with the sea of Sodom, it is one and the same range, whether known as the heights of Moab, of Ammon, or of Gilead. Let us suppose ourselves standing anywhere upon these hills,

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[1] "Who that has ever travelled in Palestine has not longed to cross the Jordan valley to those mysterious hills, which close every eastward view with their long horizontal outline, their overshadowing height, their deep purple shade?" —Stanley's Egypt and Palestine, chap. viii. sec. 1.

"The view looking back on Bethlehem, as you ascend the northern hills, is exceedingly beautiful; to the east it is bounded by the long, unbroken ridge of the mountains of Moab." — Lord Lindsay, letter iii. p. 242.

"As seen from Mount Olivet, the eastern mountains stretch off in a long, even ridge, apparently unbroken. They present to the view no single peak or separate summit." — Robinson, vol. i. sec. 6, p. 236.

Stanley says, "I was not prepared for their constant intermingling with the views of Jerusalem itself. From almost every point there was visible that long, purple wall, rising out of its unfathomable depths." — Chap. iii. sec. 3, p. 166.

and gazing towards where the sun rises. As, from some headland, we look out far over the sea, till the level line of the waters is lost in the horizon, so here, we look out upon an expanse, undulating only as the sea when the winds sleep. For six hundred miles to the eastward it is one unbroken level, — even from these Syrian hills to the Persian hills. But, in this vast plain, there is a division that is to be remarked and remembered. That part of it farthest from us is fertilized by two rivers; that part before us is a waterless desert.

Of the Great Sand Ocean of the world, known in Africa as the Zahara, in Asia as Arabia, through which the Nile marks a line of green, out of which the pinnacles of Sinai rise, and into which the high land of Palestine sinks down on the South and on the East, the expanse before us is the north-eastern Gulf. To the north-east of us, this sandy waste narrows to a point between the continuance of the ridge we stand upon and the upper waters of the Euphrates; which river, from that point, puts a limit to this desert country. From the adjacent Syria, the region before us, and, especially, more to the north-east, where it terminates in a grassy plain, is sometimes called the Syrian Desert; but all geographers hold it to be an offshoot of Arabia.[1] And

[1] "A line drawn from the head of the Persian Gulf to the head of the Arabian Gulf would seem the natural boundary of Arabia were it not for the vast desert which stretches to the northward, and is of a character so decidedly Arabian, that it has always been referred to that part of Asia. . . .

"The remainder of Arabia consists of that outer portion,

it is the very Arabia of our imagination. Nowhere are the strange features of that peculiar country better seen. There sunburnt Arabs only roam. In that great and terrible wilderness the sand-storm rises, the deadly simoom blows.[1] No road ever did or ever will cross its shifting sands. The only traveller that ever passed through it was Nebuchadnezzar, who, hearing in Palestine that his father was dead in Babylon, and fearing what might chance were he long absent from his capital, sent his captives and his army north, to shun this desert on their right, and thence circuitously home; while, with a few guards, Arab guides, and swift dromedaries, he struck straight across this pathless desert.[2]

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which, in the form of a triangle, extends along the border of Palestine and Syria, and the course of the Euphrates. In its central parts, this is the most completely desert tract of all Arabia." — Murray's Encyclopedia of Geography, part iii. b. ii. ch. iii. sec. 1.

[1] In this desert "sand-storms are frequent, and, at times, the baleful simoom sweeps across the entire tract, destroying with its pestilential breath both men and animals." — Rawlinson's Five Monarchies, vol. i. ch. i. p. 32.

[2] "Having committed to certain of his friends the conveyance to Babylon of the captive Jews, Phœnicians, and those of the Egyptian nations, together with the bulk of his army, its ammunitions and provisions, he went himself hastily, accompanied with a few others, over the desert, and came to Babylon." — Part of a fragment of the Chaldean History of Berosus, preserved in Josephus, Antiq. b. x. ch. xi. 1. The whole reads somewhat like a summary of the exploits of Nebuchadnezzar; and it is placed by Josephus after his own mention of the life and death of that monarch.

There are few contrasts on the earth's surface more striking than that between this sandy waste and the fertile land beyond — a contrast owing to the absence of the water element from the one, and its presence in the other, where the broad flowing Euphrates furrows the plain, and the swift Tigris[1] hurries on to mingle its waters with those of the Euphrates. Flowing from fountains near together in Armenia far to the north-east of us, these rivers seek, at first, the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas, but checked by mountain ranges in their westward and eastward windings, they bend southward, pour their life-giving waters through the eastern part of this flat country between Syria and Persia, and make that portion of it almost as fertile as the land of Egypt.

The Plain of the Two Rivers begins at the base of the Armenian highlands, and runs from thence south-eastward, nearly seven hundred miles, to the Persian Gulf. The northern half of it is a fine tract of land, though some small part of it is sterile, if not desert.[2] Its north-western section is diversified by spurs from the mountains; and a little below its centre, it is almost crossed, east and west, by a low, narrow, steep limestone ridge, called the Sinjar Hills. The Highlands,

[1] Philo Judæus has this curious remark: "The Tigris is a very cruel and mischievous river; and so the Magi bear witness, who have found it to be of a character quite different from the nature of other rivers." — Questions and Answers, No. 13.

[2] Hence Xenophon called this part of it Arabia, — "a plain

together with a part of the Plain,[1] were known to ancient geographers, as Mesopotamia.[2]

The southern half of the Plain is about three hundred miles in length, with an average breadth of about one hundred miles. Its level surface is broken only by frequent mounds that mark where temples or cities stood. Its alluvial soil is of inexhaustible fertility. This southern half of the Plain was known as Babylonia. It lies due east from the Holy Land.

Beyond the Tigris soon rise the ranges of the Zagros of old, now of Kurdistan — the first mountains eastward of us. These are the outposts of the elevated Plateau of ancient Persia, that stretches far towards the rising sun. Eastward of us, then, there are three well defined regions — the Desert, the Southern Plain of the two rivers, and Persia. So little of the world beyond these was known to the Hebrews, that we have only these three to consider in determining what region they called the East, and what the Far East.

One fact, very important to our inquiry, clearly ap-

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even as the sea, and full of wormwood; if any other kind of shrubs or reeds grow there, they all had an aromatic smell, but no trees were seen." — Anabasis, b. i. 5.

[1] Whose southern limit may be said to have been where a rampart, called the Median Wall, crossed nearly from river to river, from about 34° north latitude on the Tigris, to 33° 30′, on the Euphrates.

[2] The literal meaning of Mesopotamia is, "between the rivers." Rawlinson, in his Five Monarchies, vol. i. ch. i., gives to the word this vast compass. So too in Smith's Dict., Art. "Mesopotamia," if we look to the name, he

pears from the Scriptures of the Hebrews. They were always familiar with the use of the phrase "the East" in a restricted, definite, geographical sense. The geographical meaning of the term very naturally differed in different periods of their long life of fifteen hundred years in Palestine. To trace out these differences, may be neither useless nor uninteresting to those who would intelligently read the ancient records of our holy religion.

The Israelite named the four quarters of the world from their position relative to himself, as he stood facing eastward. These names are all found in this verse of

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says, "We must regard Mesopotamia as the entire country between the rivers." He describes all this, but then says, "it seems proper to append a more particular account of that region which bears the name, *par excellence*, both in Scripture and in classical writers." Of this he makes the Sinjar Hills the southern limits; and refers to Ptolem. Geograph., v. 18; Strabo, ii. 1, 29; Arrian, iii. 7.

To *Aram-naharim*, which is Mesopotamia in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, he has to give the same vast compass. But the literal meaning of this is "the highlands of the rivers;" and all the places located in this tract were in the uplands. Gen. xxiv. 10; Deut. xxiii. 4; Judges iii. 8–10. With time, it no doubt lost its descriptive meaning, and was used as a proper name; but there is no probability that it was ever extended clear down to the gulf, a distance of seven hundred miles from the highlands. As the mountaineers came to possess some portion of the plain, the name given to their country would embrace such a section of it; and this would explain the rendering it in Greek by Mesopotamia.

the book of Job:[1] "I go forward, — (Kedem, before — to the East), but he is not there; and backward (to the West), but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand (to the North), where he doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth himself on the right hand (to the South), that I cannot see Him."

It was almost inevitable, that at first the Israelite should give the name Kedem (before), the East, to the vast area of the desert, which, undiversified by ranges of hills, or the course of streams, lay before him as he looked eastward from the heights beyond the River Jordan. This broad region had no civic or natural features from which to name it; and Kedem, the East, became its name, even in the days of the patriarchs. Abraham sent the sons of his concubines "eastward into the east country;"[2] that is, far into the desert.

The East was, then, the country of wandering Arabs; and, in times earlier than the civic splendors beyond the Euphrates, the Arabs were found on the farther side of that river. Those irrepressible wanderers of the desert would get out of their bounds. With their hand against every man, they ever loved to make raids to the west, over the Jordan, into the green plain of Esdraelon; and to make raids to the east, over the Euphrates, into the garden beyond. They did so when the country on either side of their sands was thinly peopled;

[1] Job xxiii. 8, 9. [2] Gen. xxv. 6.

and they do so now, when the strength of Syria and of Assyria is alike decayed. The depth of the solitude that was to be in Babylon was painted by this touch, — "the Arabian shall not pitch his tent there;"[1] even the wild-eyed Bedouins, who, unhindered and unharmed, will cross the Euphrates, shall shun the haunted mound of Babylon.

The country of wandering tribes being then the East, with them the phrase, at times, crossed the Euphrates. Hence the kinsmen of Abraham, who seem to have dwelt permanently on the farther side of that river in tents, are called "children of the East."[2]

The use in Jacob's family of the East, for the desert, continued in the land of Egypt, because the Arabian desert, that bordered Canaan on the east and on the south, also bordered Egypt on the east. Thus the Israelites carried down with them into Egypt the name of the East for the desert, kept it while there, and brought it back with them. Alike in Goshen, and in Canaan, this name for the desert answered to various conditions in which phrases taken from the quarters of the horizon are used geographically. It was one vast, monotonous expanse in which there were no cities, no

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[1] Isaiah xiii. 20.

[2] Gen. xxix. 1; English version — people. Balaam, also, standing on the hill of Moab, says he came there from the mountains of the east. Pethor, Balaam's town, was by the Euphrates; but he may have used the term so casually, that no geographical usage can be inferred from it. Num. xxiii. 7; xxii. 5; Deut. xxiii. 4.

hills, no rivers. It had divisions well known within the black hair-tents of the Arabs; but to the land-tilling Israelites, they had as little of difference as their tribes, whom they grouped together as "children of the East."[1] The Israelites dwelt four hundred years and more in Egypt; for the time of one generation they wandered in the desert to the east of Egypt, and south of Canaan; and when they came up out of it into Canaan, they could have had little knowledge of the same desert, as it stretched far eastward of the Holy Land. But two tribes and a half loved the free life of herdsmen better than fenced cities or ploughed fields, and would dwell beyond Jordan in tents.[2] Under the grand old oaks of that high table land, and over its rich pastures, fed their "very great multitude of cattle,"[3] and down its eastern slope into the plain, till the pasture dried up into the wilderness. The two tribes and a half soon knew the desert before them; for between them and their Arab kinsmen there was no great unlikeness of manners or of language.[4]

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[1] Judges vi. 7, 8, 33; vii. 12. In the wandering, the Israelites became well acquainted with the Amalekites and the Midianites; and, hence, the sacred writers, though once (Judges viii. 10) calling them children of the East, give them their own names — illustrating how general are superseded by proper names.

[2] Joshua xxii. 7, 8.

[3] Num. xxxii. 1.

[4] Gideon's venturing by night in among the host "of the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the East," to "hear what they say," seems to prove that the

In after years, when the galleys of King Solomon had rowed down the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean and up the Persian Gulf, the whole of the great Arabian Desert was known to the children of Israel. We have seen that imperfect knowledge of a country is usually one of the conditions of the geographical use of the phrases, the East, the West, the North, and the South; and, as knowledge of the country to which such a name is given increases, this general name often gives place to a more specific one. It is in harmony with this that, when the desert became known to Israel in all its length and breadth, it received a proper name. In the book of the Kings it is called Arabia,[1] — a name unknown to earlier Scripture, and perhaps coming from the people beyond the Euphrates; and it is called so by Isaiah,[2] Ezekiel,[3] Jeremiah,[4] and Nehemiah;[5] in the book of Chronicles;[6] in the books of the Maccabees,[7] and in the New Testament.[8]

The old name gave place to the new for these reasons also: all Arabia is so like itself, and so unlike any other country; the Arabs, so like themselves and so unlike any other people, that Arabia can have but one name with those acquainted with it. When looked at as a whole, it seems to lie to the south of Palestine;

Israelites *then* could understand the speech of the desert-tribes. — Judges vii. 9–15.

[1] 1 Kings x. 15.
[2] Isa. xxi. 13.
[3] Ezek. xxvii. 21.
[4] Jer. iii. 2.
[5] Neh. iv. 7.
[6] 2 Chron. ix. 14.
[7] 2 Macc. xii. 2.
[8] Acts ii. 11.

in St. Matthew's Gospel, the Queen of Sheba is the Queen of the South[1] — and this complete view of it forbade calling part of it the East.

Thus, the old name for the desert would not long dwell side by side with its new name;[2] and about the time of this change, new relations began between the Hebrews and nations rising to power beyond the desert, which make it probable that the name "the East" would journey farther onwards, and cross the Euphrates into Babylonia.[3]

As said before, it is natural for Asiatics to use "the East," and its kindred phrases, geographically, and, though the territory of the Hebrews was small, and on the edge of Asia, their Scriptures abundantly illus-

[1] Matt. xii. 42.

[2] It might for a time. See Isaiah xi. 14; Jeremiah xlix. 28.

[3] As I end this inquiry as to the oldest Hebrew use of the phrase "the East," I would note a fact that bears upon the authenticity of the books of Moses. Gen. x. 26–30, gives the lineage and locality of some of the chief tribes of Arabia. The dwelling-place of Sheba, Havilah, Ophir, and others, is "from Mesha," — near the present Mocha, — "as thou goest unto Sepha, a mount of the East," — highlands running from near Mecca and Medina across the peninsula. Now "the East" would not have been used in that way by one writing in Palestine. It might have been by one in the desert south of it. And the whole passage seems to hint at "the wisdom of the Egyptians," or at a knowledge of the Arabian peninsula gained from the Arabs of Midian.

In this place alone the article is prefixed to Kedem — the East — just as it is to the second form of Anatole, in the Hebraized Greek of St. Matthew, ch. ii. 2.

trate and confirm this. While they were comparatively isolated from the rest of the world this appears, and still more clearly afterwards. As the exile drew nigh, Assyria became "the North," and upon this, Babylonia would very naturally become "the East."

Assyria lay not so far north as east, and the latitude of the phrase is such that it might have been called the East; but the Hebrew prophets looked upon it as a northern power. Its direction admitted of this; and the first appearing of the Assyrian in Palestine was always from that quarter. He never invaded Judea directly from the east, because on that side it was protected by the desert. To avoid this, he crossed over to Damascus — as did the Chaldean after him. Thence he came down the upper valley of the Jordan, and, as he marched southwards, kept that river on his left. Had he moved down on the east bank of the river, when he came to a point on a line with Jerusalem, there would have been in front of him, as he faced towards the city, the wide valley of the Jordan sunk below the level of the ocean, and, in a military point of view, a sort of natural fosse, that made Judea almost unassailable from that quarter. Hence the prophets looked to the northern hills of their own land when they saw the war-storm rolling down on Zion. In Isaiah's vision of the approach of the army of Sennacherib, those hills are nigh to the Holy City. Over the heights and through the strong passes of warlike Benjamin the heathen comes, until his last stand is on

the Mount of Olives, whence he "shakes his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."[1] So, too, in the clarion-call of the prophet Jeremiah to the most valiant of the tribes: "O, ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem, for evil appeareth out of the North."[2]

Besides this, the invader could not threaten Israel till he had first reduced the kingdoms northward of it to his imperial rule; and the armies of his subject allies marched with his, when

> "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
> And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold,
> And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea,
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

"Assur came out of the mountains from the North; he came with ten thousands of his army; the multitude whereof stopped the torrents, and their horsemen have covered the hills."[3] Of the Assyrian Empire, as embodied in its vast and varied host, the later prophets and writers of Israel spake, even as they did when they said of the seat of its dominion, the Lord "will stretch out his hand against the North and destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation."[4] But, when a still more awful storm of war gathered far off in the same

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[1] See Robinson, vol. i. sec. 9, p. 463. Stanley, ch. iv. sec. 1. Isaiah x. 32.

[2] Jer. vi. 1. [3] Judith xvi. 4. [4] Zeph. ii. 13.

quarter of the horizon, but to the South of the seat of the Assyrian power, the Country whence its overshadowing arose, darkening all the west, must have been known as the East.[1]

[1] It is closely to be considered when, where, by whom, and for whom, such phrases are used. Not only the Assyrian Empire, but the Babylonian also, is spoken of by the prophets as the North, — as in Jer. i. 13, 14, 15; vi. 22; x. 22; Isaiah xiv. 13, — and it is not always easy to tell to which the term refers. The latter usage had its root in the former, and did not conflict with the use of "the East" for Babylonia. It is the Babylonian Empire that absorbed into itself the Assyrian, which is pictured as a northern power; and the explanations given of this usage as to Assyria, except the first, apply here, especially the allusion in the term to those kingdoms to the northward of Palestine, that were subject to the Empire of the Chaldees, — as appears from these Scriptures: "I will send and take all the families of the North, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof;" — Jer. xxv. 9. "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem;" — Jer. xxxiv. 1. "Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, a king of kings, from the North, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and companies, and much people." — Ezekiel xxvi. 7. Here, as before, the seat of his dominion is named, and then the words "from the North" point to his war-path, when, with his northern allies, he comes down upon Tyre.

Jeremiah (ch. xlvi. 20, 24), addressing Egypt, calls the Babylonian Empire, as if seen from her stand-point, the North, and with allusion also to the coming down of its army through Syria. He also speaks of the defeat of the Egyp-

Thus, as the roll of ancient Scripture was closing, Babylon "of the Chaldees,"[1] — "that bitter and hasty nation . . . their horses swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves,"[2] — became the terror of the world; and the East, ceasing to be the name for the Desert, came to mean the new and terrible Dominion beyond the "Great River." Ezekiel, prophesying the ruin of the Ammonites, in more ancient Scripture themselves "the children of the East," says they shall be destroyed by "the children of the East" — meaning the Chaldeans.[3] Isaiah, referring to the superstitions and sins of Babylonish heathenism, reproaches "the house of Jacob" with being full of the sorceries of "the

tians at Carchemish, on the Euphrates, as in the North country, which it might be called, as looked upon either from Memphis or Jerusalem. Memphis, N. lat. 29° 56′; Jerusalem, 31° 49′; Carchemish, 35° 15′.

There are several other applications of this phrase. "The princes of the North," Ezekiel xxxii. 30, must be the Tyrians, as they are named with the Sidonians, and the ground of this usage is plain from the map. In Jeremiah, ch. l. 2, 3, 9, 41, the people who are to come from the North against Babylon, are the Medes, part of whose territory lay to the northward of that city.

[1] Isaiah xiii. 19.

[2] Hab. i. 6, 8.

[3] Ezek. xxv. 3, 4, 5, 10. This prophecy is one of a series that includes all the Arab tribes who rejoiced in the ruin of the Hebrew nation, and its fulfilment, in part at least, is recorded by Josephus, when he says, "In the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar made war against the Ammonites and the Moabites, and brought those nations into subjection." — Antiq. x. 9, 7.

East."[1] To these evidences of this usage may be added this verse: "Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all the children of the East Country, and all the wisdom of Egypt."[2] To refer this, as many have done, to the wisdom of the desert, is unsatisfactory indeed; for no especial wisdom can be attributed to the Arabs in or before Solomon's time, and none in their own country at any time. Besides this, the numerous preceding allusions in Scripture to the Arabs, give them the character of wild marauders, dreaded by their more civilized neighbors, the Israelites; so that the ill-considered notion, that this passage refers to them, is as repugnant to Hebraic, as to general history. This interpretation then being rejected, it is plain, that, as in the verses of Isaiah and Ezekiel just referred to, so here, "the children of the East" mean the Babylonians. This interpretation gives the two clauses of the verse a well-balanced significance, pronouncing the wisdom of Solomon superior to that of the two great countries from immemorial time renowned for learning.[3]

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[1] Isaiah ii. 6. [2] 1 Kings iv. 30.

[3] The astronomical records of the Babylonians were of great antiquity — evidence enough of their early eminence in learning. See, hereafter, page 110. The Hebrew annals are silent as to the cities and kingdoms on the Euphrates and Tigris, — save notices in the book of Genesis, — until near the close of the period of the Kings of Israel; but this is no sufficient evidence that, till then, the Israelites knew nothing of them. The fact must have been otherwise, and there are indications of this in the prophets. In the long commercial reign of Solomon, the Israelites must have gained

Of the East as the phrase was thus used, on three sides, the natural boundaries were well defined.[1] On the south it reached the Persian Gulf. The Euphrates marked its nearer limit, and more effectually because it was reached through a waterless desert. On its farther side, were the mountains along the left bank of the Tigris.

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some knowledge of the East; and there seems to be no good reason why this verse might not have been written at the close of Solomon's reign. This would carry much farther back a usage found in Isaiah, but only to a period in which it might have naturally originated. Besides this, the book of the Kings is thought by some to have been compiled by Jeremiah, who lived a little later than Isaiah.

In the interpretation, the choice is between the Arabs and the Babylonians. The general sense of the "wisdom of the eastern world" is forbidden by the restricting form of the phrase.

The LXX. refer it to the ἀρχαῖοι ἄνθρωποι — the wisdom of the men of old, of the wise of ancient days, evidently from the fact that *Kedem*, — which, primarily and literally, means *before*, — may have a time-sense, or a space-sense. The rendering is ingenious, and its sense is grand; but it presupposes a late origin for the wisdom of Egypt, which was hoary with age in Abraham's day; and it has found no favor with modern scholars. Still, this far-fetched interpretation has this value. It shows the LXX. thought the phrase could not here point to the Arabs, as it often does in older Scripture.

[1] In fact, on the north also the boundary was well defined. The section of the Plain of the Two Rivers south of the Median Wall (see note 1, p. 33), is alluvial, differing in this from that north of it, which, also, is somewhat more elevated. Below the wall, canals crossed from river to river, irrigating the plain between them.

A fitting theatre for great events! Here, the Tower of Babel rose, and here, in after times, was Babylon. In this land of Shinar was the first gathering-place of the sons of men. It was the oldest haunt of Empire, and long the coveted prize of power. It was the battle-plain of nations. Here the Assyrian fought; here the Chaldean, the Mede, the Greek, the Parthian, the Roman. But it was not the abiding dwelling-place appointed to any one people. It had no natural centre. It had no lines of defence that could be permanently held against the tribes of the mountains and the desert. Its hot climate was so enervating, that its abounding wealth became the booty of hardier races. Nowhere were seen splendor and havoc in more vivid change. Yet it was long the mart of the commerce of Central and Western Asia, the commerce that built up Palmyra in the Waste, and Baalbec between the ridges of Lebanon, a commerce, one of whose outlets to the Mediterranean was along "the Way of the Sea"[1] of Galilee, on whose busy western shore, which, in the first century, was almost a continuous line of cities, towns, and villages, St. Matthew must have often seen the long, overladen files of the slow moving caravans coming from "the East."

Before the Exile, the Jews had begun to call the world-historic Babylonian Plain "the East;" and St. Matthew's term might, perhaps, be sufficiently explained as a lingering reminiscence of ancient usage; but

[1] Isa. ix. 1; Matt. iv. 15.

there is reason to think that, after the Exile, this use of "the East" continued while the Jews lived in Palestine. To estimate the probability of this, we must free ourselves of the feeling we unconsciously attribute to them, that all there was of interest in that country centred in Babylon. As Babylon the Great is strangely, and even mysteriously, withdrawn from our eyes, the Plain, that was resplendent with the light of its glory, seems all at once to become that darkened and solitary waste that now answers "so eloquently well" to the prophecies of ancient days: "I will render to Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion:"[1] "Babylon shall become heaps, . . . an astonishment, . . , without an inhabitant:"[2] "her cities a desolation, . . . a land where no man dwelleth:"[3] "I will also make it a possession for the bittern and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts."[4]

But, with the Lord, a thousand years are as one day; and centuries passed before the desolations his prophets foresaw in vision, were seen by the eyes of men. Zion was a ploughed field and Judea a waste, while Babylonia continued to be populous and great. Even with the sure decay of its mighty city, that country lost but little of its importance to the Jews. The Persian, while he was the sovereign of Palestine, held Babylon as one of his capitals. When his dominion passed away, the noble city of Seleucia, at a distance

[1] Jer. li. 24.
[2] Jer. li. 37.
[3] Jer. li. 43.
[4] Isa. xiv. 23.

of only forty-five miles from the site of Babylon, rose in its stead. It was one of the thirty-five great cities built by Seleucus, who became, after Alexander, the Greek lord of Central Asia, and also ruled over Palestine; and it was the capital of the eastern part of his wide dominions. "Seleucia contained a numerous Jewish population, on whom Seleucus bestowed privileges equal to those granted to his own countrymen."[1] After the Greek dominion in Asia had passed away, Seleucia, girt with its strong walls, continued even into the second century, in spite of the Parthian power, a free city, with its own senate of three hundred members, ruling over its six hundred thousand citizens.[2] Ctesiphon, also a vast city, and one of the capitals of the Parthian Empire, was built close to it. As under the Persians, so under the Greeks, down to the re-establishment of the independence of the Hebrews by the Maccabees, it continued to be one of the chief seats of that royal authority, which the Jews of Palestine obeyed. And it ever had this of interest to them: it was the dwelling-place of many of their countrymen, as many probably as the population of Judea itself, for but a small part of the Judean captives came back from thence to Palestine. The larger part remained in the land of their exile, and

[1] Post-Biblical History of the Jews, vol. i. ch. iii. p. 110. I would earnestly commend to all Christian scholars this admirable treatise by the very learned Rabbi, the late Dr. Raphall, as, in some respects, the best in our language.

[2] Gibbon, ch. viii. sec. 2.

greatly increased in numbers there.[1] These Jews kept up an annual intercourse with Palestine; and messengers were sent from Jerusalem into their country every year to collect silver and gold for the temple.[2]

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[1] The language of Josephus is very strong — "The entire body of the people of Israel remained." — Antiq. lib. x. 5, 2. Of the Jews of his own time, he says, "Not a few ten thousands dwelt in Babylonia." — Antiq. lib. xv. iii. 1.

As to the question, Whether Babylon was inhabited in the first century? — from general considerations it seems to me that it was. The Persians cherished the city. The Greeks and the Parthians had no reason to destroy it, and there is no evidence that they did. It was a great city, and it perished not by the violence of man, but, as it was fitting, by the visitation of God, dying a lingering death. The idea that Seleucia was known as Babylon is in itself improbable, and Plutarch names them together. — Life of Crassus.

The evidence of Josephus to the fact that Babylon was a city in the time of Herod, is as strong as it can be. He says that, early in his reign, Hyrcanus, the high priest, was taken captive by the Parthians, and that Phraates, the Parthian king, "gave him a habitation at Babylon, where there were Jews in great numbers." — Antiq. lib. xv. ii. 2. Also, that Herod sent for Ananelus, an obscure priest of Babylon, and bestowed on him the high priesthood. — Antiq. lib. xv. ii. 4.

[2] "Vast numbers of the Jews were scattered over every city of Asia and Syria." — Philo, Ad Caium, sec. 33. See also, Contra Flaccum, sec. 7. He says, "Babylon, and the satrapies of the rich, adjacent districts have many Jewish inhabitants," and that yearly, messengers were sent there to collect silver and gold for the temple. — Ad Caium, sec. 31. In Yonge's excellent version of Philo, in this passage, Philo's language is that of St. Matthew: "Babylon and many other satrapies of the East;" but on comparing this with

Ever after the Exile the Jews of Palestine well knew the country called by their prophets "the East;" and so one of the causes from which such usage is apt to prevail, did not exist; but there were others that did. Geographically, that country is one; and at the Christian era, it was under one Parthian rule; yet then, as now, under one Turkish rule, it had many districts and many petty rulers; and these were then, as now, ever changing. And at the Christian era, the proper names that had in former ages pertained to it, were out of date. It had been called the land of Shinar,[1] but that was before the nations were. It had been called the land of the Chaldeans,[2] but their dominion had long passed away. Babylon, eclipsed for centuries by the imperial cities in its vicinity, could then have hardly given its name to the province in that familiar speech, that so readily reflects the changes of Empire. It is not probable, then, that at the Christian era its common name in Palestine was any one of its historical names of older and different times. There is nothing to show that any later historical name had arisen; and, from all the circumstances, it is not probable[3] — even as none has arisen since; yet among the Jews of Palestine, it must then have had some colloquial name.

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the original, it will be found that the words "of the East" are supplied by the translator.

[1] Gen. x. 10; xi. 2.

[2] Isa. xxiii. 13. Jer. xxv. 12.

[3] The peculiar fact, that the once imperial, and still very great city of Seleucia, was independent of the Parthians, must have stood in the way of this.

The caravan that journeyed from the land of Shinar to the Holy Land, bearing with it the golden vessels of the Temple, that was to rise anew on the mountain of Moriah, was made up of Israelites born in the great Plain of the Euphrates. They reached the desolated site of the city they were to build again, by a circuitous route, coming down upon it — as the Assyrian and the Chaldean before — from the North. But they well knew that the land of their youthful memories lay

> Right against the eastern gate,
> Where the great sun begins his state.

Their country was long governed from thence; and when this bond between it and them was broken, still the children of the kinsmen they left behind came up from thence to worship in Jerusalem, and whatever historical names it may have had with them, it is very natural to suppose that in familiar household converse, this land so often thought of, so often spoken of, was known to them, as it was to their fathers in the generation preceding the Exile, by the local, idiomatic name of the East.[1]

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[1] The resemblance between this Hebrew usage, and the use of the name "the East," as the popular name in Massachusetts for the State of Maine, has been referred to on p. 26. Down to the year 1820, Maine was united to Massachusetts, and its legal title was the District of Maine; — a name not satisfactory, and not easy to speak. The people are quick to catch up a new name, when one they often use does not easily melt into the flow of speech. Maine was settled in part from Massachusetts. Boston was

Writers trained in the artificial rhetoric of the schools, are inclined to reject colloquial phrases, as beneath the dignity of a learned style; but the untrammelled genius of St. Matthew was not thus hindered from using household words — as when he wrote the Holy City, for Jerusalem. St. Matthew chose words most definite to himself and wrote naturally. Thus he gave to Babylonia the name he was accustomed to give to it in familiar converse, and which pointed it out exactly to his countrymen. He might have used one of its old scriptural names;[1] but, when he was intro-

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its commercial and political capital. Hence the phrase — so common in such cases — *up* to Boston; and the peculiar, invariable form of the phrase — "*down* East."

My first faint impression that St. Matthew's term was a local idiom, with a restricted and definite geographical meaning, may unconsciously have come from this usage; for I was familiar with it in my youth, hearing it ten times where I heard the word Maine once. Thus, — "the family has moved down East," or, "he lives," or "has gone down East." So, too, the first railroad from Massachusetts to Maine was "the Eastern Railroad;" while it was the second that was called "the Boston and Maine."

As bearing on a line of thought in the Appendix to this chapter, it may be well to add, that although this usage, having been long established, is generally understood in the United States, it is strictly a local idiom of a section, only, of New England.

[1] Had he called it the land of the Chaldeans, it would have tended to confound the Magi with a learned class addicted to astrology, and known as Chaldeans; and this name was obsolete in his time. St. Stephen used it (Acts vii. 4), but as both Philo, De Abrah., sec. 17, and Josephus,

ducing the pilgrim strangers as Persians, he did not desire to recall any of the historical reminiscences associated with them; and so, the name he did use — the East — was in every way suited to his purpose.

This term, — the East, — then, is not general or vague. It means that country which in the common speech of man, will be ever known as Babylonia; for, by every geographical and historical consideration, in the first century, this country answers, beyond all reasonable doubt, to the name — the East — on the lips of a Hebrew in Palestine. Thus, the Magi tell us, that the Star of the Lord was first known by human eyes in the land of Shinar, where its earliest beams shone serenely down on the vanishing splendors of the mighty and mystic Babylon.

Having determined what is meant in St. Matthew by the East, it will not be difficult, nor detain us long, to determine what is meant by the Far East. For, however vague this term may seem in itself, by its relation here to the term — the East — its meaning was clear to the Jews of Palestine, through their acquaintance with the eastern world; and it becomes so to all, on looking at the map of Western Asia.

Again, let us stand on the highlands beyond the Jordan, and look out over the Great Plain, in part a desert, in part the garden of Asia. As these highlands

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Antiq. i. vii. 1, contrast the wisdom of Abraham with the philosophy of the Chaldeans, the same thought may have led to his allusion to Abraham as dwelling in the land of the Chaldeans, and the antiquated name was in keeping with his biblical argument.

overlook this Plain on this side, so, on the other, do the mountains that rise from the High Plateau of Persia beyond, which must be the Far East of the Evangelist. It lies very directly in the line indicated, not widening much to the south, because of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean; nor to the north, because of the Caspian Sea and its inhospitable eastern shore. The separation between it and the East is clearly defined. And the term cannot point farther on, for it must reach its limit before it can pass the barren mountains and trackless deserts in which Persia loses itself in that direction, an almost impassable country, little known in ancient or in modern days.

But the question here comes up, Why did not St. Matthew use the proper geographical name, and say Magi from Persia? No geographical name would have pointed out to those for whom he wrote, the "country of the Magi," more clearly than his familiar name, the Far East — especially as here used in connection with the East; and it was the best name he could use. That Aryan race of Persians and Medes, known to us by the name of the former only, who, in all historic time, have constituted the great majority of the people of that country known to us as Persia, have always called that country Iran, that is the Aryan land.[1]

[1] "The appellation of Persia is unknown to its inhabitants, by whom that region of Asia is named Iran." — Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia, by J. B. Fraser, ch. i. p. 1. "Iran, which Europeans call Persia. . . . Iran has from the most ancient times to the present

Through all its dynasties, Assyrian, Median, Persian, Greek, Parthian, and Moslem, this name is appropriate to it. Not so the name Persia, given to that country by the Greeks, from the tribe ruling there when first they became acquainted with it. The Persian sovereignty over it ceased three hundred years and more before St. Matthew's time; and, for two hundred years and more, it had been ruled by the Parthians. The Jews of Palestine were so familiar with these political changes that, probably, the name for that country in classical Greek was not much used in their Oriental, Hebraized dialect of that language, and may have meant that part of it occupied by the Persians, Media being joined with it to designate the whole country.[1]

But, could he not have said — Magi of the Persians? No; for, of the Aryan race, in the Aryan land, there were two great families, the Medes and the Persians.[2]

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day been the term by which the Persians call their country." — Malcolm, vol. i. p. 1, n. Compare Herodotus, ch. vii. 62. "Anciently the Medes were called, by all nations, Aryans." This word is sometimes written "Arians," as by Rawlinson; but its use in that form in ecclesiastical history makes the form here given preferable.

[1] This was sometimes the case in the Old Testament, as in Esther i. 3, 14; Dan. viii. 20. It is so also in the Greek of the Apocrypha, as in 1 Esdras iii. 1, — "the princes of Media and Persia." See note 2, p. 56.

[2] Parthia was but a district of Iran; the Parthians were rather barbarous and few, compared with the rest of its population, and they did not impress their name on the Aryan land. Thus, Josephus speaks of the Parthians and of the King of the Parthians, not of Parthia. See Antiq.,

On the tomb of Darius the Great is written, "I am an Aryan, of Aryan descent; a Persian, the son of a Persian."[1] In Syria, in the Evangelist's time, the distinction was still kept up;[2] and he would have had to use

lib. xiii. ch. viii. 4; ch. xiv. 3; lib. xiv. ch. xiii., passim; ch. vi. 2; ch. vii. 1; lib. xv. ch. ii. 1; ch. iii. 9. Had the Evangelist called the strangers Parthians, he would have obscured the very relations he wished to point out, by connecting them with a race with whom their relations were those of government, and not of history or lineage.

[1] Journal of the Asiatic Society, vol. xi. 291–313; vol. xii. App. xix.–xxi.

[2] Looking at this Aryan race from a stand-point far off, alike in space and in time, we blend completely into one its two great families, and call them Persians, as we call those who fell at Thermopylæ and those Macedonians who followed Alexander, alike, Greeks. But the Jews recognized the difference. In their Scriptures, as in general history, first, the Medes appear. Israel is captive in "the cities of the Medes." — 2 Kings xvii. 6. In the prophets it is the Medes, with whose name alone they were then acquainted, that are first seen: "The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes" against Babylon. — Jer. li. 11, and Isaiah xiii. 17. At length the other great family comes in sight, and "the kingdom of Persia." — 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20. But the distinction is not lost sight of. Darius is "the Median," Cyrus "the Persian." — Daniel v. 31; vi. 28. There are "the laws of the Persians and Medes," Esther i. 19; "the seven princes of Persia and Media," i. 14; and "the province of the Medes," Ezra vi. 2. The Persians often gave their own name to the whole people and territory in the days of their Empire; but afterwards, as the Medes were the most numerous and their territory the largest, they must have become at the last, as at the first, the more prominent of the two. Generally, in the Apocrypha, the terms are

the word Persians in the narrower sense that King Darius did, as excluding the Medes. This may have been what he did not mean to do; for the little evidence there is on the subject goes to prove that the Order of the Magi belonged rather to the Median than to the Persian branch of this Aryan family.[1] It is probable St. Matthew did not know whether the strangers belonged to the Median or the Persian branch; and it was quite immaterial. What he wished to do, was to point out that they belonged to that Aryan race, of old the benefactor of Israel.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the Far East twice means Persia. There, Cyrus is "the Man from the Far East,"[2] and the Persian Eagle is "the eagle from the Far East."[3]

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used as in the Scriptures. In the book of Tobit, it is all Media; in the book of Judith, it is said, "the Persians quaked at her boldness, and the Medes were daunted by her hardihood (xvi. 10); and it looks very much like confirmation of what has just been said, when, in 2 Esdras i. 3, one is spoken of as "a captive in the land of the Medes, in the reign of Artaxerxes, King of the Persians." It accords with this and shows how familiar, even to the last, the Jews in Palestine were with the state of things in Persia, that, in Acts ii. 9, where we might expect the name of the Persians, St. Peter speaks of the "Parthians and the Medes."

[1] Herodotus, ch. i. 101, says the Magi were a tribe of the Medes.

[2] Isa. xli. 2.

[3] Isa. xlvi. 11;—"a ravenous bird." The eagle was the emblem of Persia.—Æschylus, Persæ, 205–210. Xenophon says "the ensign of Cyrus was a golden eagle held upon the top of a long lance. This remains the ensign of the Persian king to this day."—Cyrop., vii. 1.

This was in passages that brought vividly to mind the relations of old between the Holy City and those kings of Iran, who ordered the temple to be rebuilt at their own cost, and prayers there to be said for the king and the people of Persia forever,[1] — relations the Evangelist might well recall, as he told of the coming of Magi from Persia to Jerusalem.

[1] Josephus, Antiq., lib. xi. ch. 2. 3; ch. 4. 9.; ch. 5. 1.

CHAPTER III.

CHARACTER AND RELIGION OF THE PERSIANS.

SINCE these things are so, light may be shed on this Persian pilgrimage from the Character and Religion of the Persians of old. But a common knowledge of these — if I may judge by my own, when some years since I began this inquiry — can hardly be assumed; and an explanation of this pilgrimage must sketch them, in outline, at least.

Even this is not so easy. The time is far back. The country far away. Its few ruinous monuments are like rocks that, rising out of the sea, doubtfully point to the bearing of mountain ranges, and the configuration of lands sunk in the waters. The light is obscure. The guides not over trustworthy. I dare not despise aught that may help me in trying to draw, as well as I can, the portrait of the Persian of old. I will fill out my conception of what the Persian was, from what he is now. This I may rightly do; for, in all the vicissitudes of his history, he has had much the same characteristics.

The Persian is of the Caucasian type. His complexion is rather dark; his face oval; his abundant hair black, and fine of texture; his forehead high; eyebrows

arching and connected; eyes large, brilliant, and dark; his features regular, serious, and calm; lips thin; chin narrow; beard flowing; his chest broad; limbs well-proportioned; hands and feet well-shaped; his gait erect and fine; his walk graceful.[1] Of old, as now, he was fond of dress: — "the long and carefully curled hair of the Persians is conspicuous on the sculptures of Persepolis."[2] Of old, as now, the Persian was fond of show; yet high-spirited and brave. Of old, as now, he was luxurious in his feelings, and a lover of wine; yet hardy in his training, temperate in his food, patient under privation, much in the open air, a horseman, and given to sports of the field. Of old, as now, the Persian was courtly, lively, quick-witted. He was social,

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[1] "The Persians are more than good-looking, they are a handsome race" (Malcolm's Sketches of Persia, ch. xii. p. 126); "and fond of decorating their persons" (ch. xvii. p. 229). But most of the people of the northern provinces of Persia are of Tartar origin. Of such are the Persian merchants seen in the bazaars of Constantinople. Of such are most of the ruling class and the reigning family; but intermarriage with Persians has bettered the physical peculiarities of the Tartar race. Lady Shiel, wife of a British minister at Teheran, the capital of Persia, in "Glimpses of Life in Persia," says of one of the royal family, "She was really lovely; fair, with indescribable eyes, and a figure only equalled by the chefs-d'œuvre of Italian art." The same beauty of form that now marks the pure Persian race is seen on the old sculptures of Persepolis.

[2] Rawlinson's Herodotus, vol. iii. p. 424. The Persians wore long hair. — Herodotus, book vi. sec. 19.

convivial, pleased with himself, proud of his country,[1] — the Frenchman of the East.[2]

On his lips, the poetry and extravagance of the East; yet sometimes with a simple grandeur of word. On his tomb at Pasargadæ, the founder of the Persian empire recalls the founder of his family; of his own deeds he says nothing, — his name will call them up; — "I am Cyrus, the King, the Achæmenian."

Of old, with an immortal instinct that led him to keep records and set up monuments, Cyrus the Great made a decree; the fourth king after him was petitioned that search might be made for this; and search was made in "the house of rolls," and the "roll" of the

[1] "The Persians look upon themselves as greatly superior to the rest of mankind." — Herodotus, book i. sec. 134.

[2] "I accord to the Persian all the politeness of manners, and all the readiness and vivacity of wit that are wanting to the Osmanli." — Vamberry's Travels in Central Asia, book i. p. 22. Bishop Southgate contrasts their affability with the reserve of the Turks (Tour in Armenia and Persia, vol. ii. ch. i. p. 9, 10), and says, "the Persians are certainly among the most accessible and polite people on earth" (ch. ii. p. 18). Their resemblance to Frenchmen strikes all travellers in Persia. It is, at least, curious that this likeness reaches to skill in cookery — an art in which Persian princesses are proud to display their success; and to a distaste for a seafaring life. Malcolm says, "The natives of this place" — a small port on the Persian Gulf — "are almost all of the Arab race, and fond of the sea; a propensity the more remarkable, as it is in such strong contrast with the disposition of the Persians, of whom all classes have an unconquerable antipathy to that element." — Sketches, ch. iii. p. 33.

decree was found.[1] A steep rock, seventeen hundred feet high, overhangs the thoroughfare between Babylonia and Persia. On the smooth face of this rock-tablet, three hundred feet above the ground, Darius the Great ordered an image of himself to be sculptured, erect, holding his bow, two of his officers of state behind him, a rebel under his feet, nine others in bonds before him, and, beneath, a record of the first five years of his reign to be carved in three languages, — and there the traveller beholds it now.[2]

The palace of the Persian of old was the noblest pile, his palace-hall, the largest ever built by regal policy or pride,[3] — fitting the state of the sovereign, whom the Greeks ever called "the Great King." The court of the Persian of old was sublime, — shadowing forth his conception of the court on high.

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[1] Ezra v. 6–17; vi. 1–13.

[2] This long rock-inscription at Behistun is in the Persian, Babylonian, and Scythian languages. It was executed (B. C. 515) by the command of Darius Hystaspes, fourth monarch of the empire. A translation of it is given in Rawlinson's Herodotus, vol. ii. p. 590, etc.

[3] The idea of the magnificence of the palaces of the Persian kings given by the book of Esther, ch. i. 5, 6, is confirmed by the ruins of Persepolis. Ferguson, in a Treatise on the Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, describing the ruin now called the Hall of Xerxes, makes these statements: "The central hall alone covered more than forty thousand square feet, or, with its walls, fifty-five thousand seven hundred; its three porticos add forty-two thousand five hundred feet to this, and, including the guard-rooms (six thousand eight hundred), it makes a rectangle of about

With something of Asiatic indifference to the worth of human life, the Persians of old were not cruel by nature. With something of Oriental sensuality, they

three hundred feet by three hundred and fifty, or one hundred and five thousand square feet. The great Hall of Karnac, in Egypt, the most stupendous building of antiquity, covers, internally, but fifty-eight thousand three hundred feet, and with its walls and porticos only eighty-eight thousand eight hundred. No cathedral in England, nor, indeed, in France or Germany, covers so much ground; that of Cologne comes nearest to it — eighty-one thousand five hundred feet. Milan cathedral covers one hundred and seven thousand eight hundred feet. He finds, or fancies some resemblance between this building and the Hall of Xerxes, in the general character of the effect it must have produced upon the spectator, and says, "Neither is quite satisfactory; yet the most rigid critic cannot deny that they produce a sensation of bewilderment and beauty which it is impossible to resist, and, to most minds, they seem, and must have always appeared to be among the noblest creations of human intellect and human power." — Part i. sec. i. pp. 171–2.

He says, "I cannot conceive anything more gorgeous, or, perhaps, much more beautiful, than such a building as this must have appeared in the clear sunshine of a Persian climate, if ornamented and colored as I conceive it to have been in the days of its pristine magnificence." — Part i. sec. i. p. 155.

Of the Colossal Bulls, fifteen feet in height, which adorned the Propylæa of this edifice, he says, "There is a massiveness in the muscular development, and a rugged solidity about the joints, which give to these animals a character of gigantic force unmatched, so far as I know, in animal sculpture, but analogous to what the Greeks attained in their representation of Hercules." — Part i. sec. i. p. 109. Of Persian architecture, as compared with Grecian, he says,

were distinguished by moral sensibility. "They hold it," says Herodotus, "unlawful to talk of anything it is unlawful to do.[1] Lying, they think, is most disgraceful; and, next to this, to be in debt. This, for several reasons, but especially because they think that one who is in debt, must of necessity tell lies."[2] One of their names for God was, "The Father of Truth."

The Persian now is speculative and fond of the mysterious, but not fanatical. The Persian of old was imaginative, earnestly inquisitive, generously appreciative. He easily adopted foreign customs; — "no nation," says Herodotus, "more readily;"[3] — yet he was tenacious of his own ideas. The law of the Medes and Persians altered not. Their ancient religion sometimes attracted and allied thoughts and usages of other nations, yet ever kept its own.[4]

"The comparison is more favorable to Persia than one might at first be led to expect; and her Art, when we accustom ourselves to its unfamiliar forms, has an elegance and grace, as well as an appropriateness, that renders it well worthy of study and attention." — Part i. sec. i. p. 87, 88, 89.

[1] Herodotus, book i. sec. 138.

[2] Book i. sec. 138. They teach their sons three things; to ride, to use the bow, and to speak the truth. — Book i. sec. 136. In Persia, Malcolm says, "nobody walks." In the sadddle the Persians handle the matchlock as adroitly as of old the bow. But all travellers report that, as to truthfulness, they have degenerated.

[3] Herodotus, book i. sec. 135.

[4] Of the Parsees, as the small remnant of believers in the old Persian religion in Persia and India are called, converts to Christianity there are few or none.

In energy, the Persians, of all Asiatics, are most like Europeans. This energy is due in part to the bounds appointed them. A country central in Asia; low, sandy, hot coasts along the gulf; elsewhere, an upland of cool and bracing air; mountain ridges in all directions; vales and plains of verdure; vast salt deserts — on the whole a poor country,[1] uninviting to strangers,[2] yet loved with passion by the Persians, whose thousand poets,[3] in strains awaking the envy of other countries, sing the land of the rose and the nightingale.

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[1] Yet the Persians may well boast of their fruits. In the hot, sandy tract, the date, the fig, the pomegranate, the lemon, the orange, come to perfection; and the grapes of Shiraz are good as its wine. The peach tree is said to be a native of Persia, and there grow all the fruits of the temperate zone.

[2] Yet a most interesting country, as presenting divers forms of life, that for European races live only in history and romance. The Persians, listening to bards reciting from the Shahnameh, recall the Greeks, who, in like manner and with like emotion, knew the songs of Homer. The wild clans of the mountains, with their fealty to their chiefs, their fastnesses among the hills, their raids on the flocks and herds of the lowlands, are the Highlanders in the novels of Scott. The lords of Persia in their strongholds, with armed retainers around, are the great nobles of the Feudal age in Europe; their power, their state, their high heroic qualities the same; their passions, too, the same; the same their lawlessness, their craft, their cruelty.

[3] Literally so, if we count in the number the bards, who, in every village, and to the tribes of the mountains at nightfall, to impassioned listeners crowding round, recite heroic stanzas from the Shahnameh, or sing the odes of Hafiz, or

The historic period of Persia began in the seventh century before Christ (B. C. 658), when Achæmenes — a leader whose name the Persian monarchs loved to recall — led an emigration into a narrow territory, along the northern shore of the Persian Gulf. There he founded a kingdom; and there were the ancient Persian capitals, Pasargadæ and Persepolis. When the Persians thus came into Persia Proper, their kinsmen, the Medes, who appear earlier in history, dwelt in the region adjoining it on the north. A century later, these kindred tribes, coming under one government, ruled from the highlands east of the Tigris to the highlands west of the Indus, and from the Caspian Sea and the River Oxus to the Persian Gulf. The Persian Empire, thus founded in the sixth century before Christ (B. C. 558) by Cyrus the Great, besides Persia or Iran, embraced, at one time or another, Assyria, Syria, Asia Minor, islands of the Ægean, Egypt, parts of Arabia, of Scythia, and of India. In the fourth century before Christ (B. C. 331) Persia was conquered by the Greeks. In the third century before Christ the Parthians — a tribe that had been subject to the Persians — rose up against the successors of Alexander, and at length founded the Parthian Empire. In the third century after Christ (A. D. 226) the Persians reestablished their own kingdom. In the seventh century (A. D. 651) the Arabs converted the Persians to Mohammedanism by the sword. The cruelty of their

of Saadi. Persia is just at that stage of culture when poetry is the passion of all classes.

conquest, while it explains their success, shows the Persians tenacious of their religion. Its success is also explained by the fact, that the religion of the Persians and of Mohammed had points of contact in the idea of one God, in detestation of idols, and in some common traditions. In some Moslem sects in Persia, and in Persian poetry, an influence from the old religion may be discerned; but so thorough was the conquest, that only a few who clung to the old religion remained in Persia; only a few escaped into India. In Persia this remnant are called Guebres — Fire Worshippers. In India they are called Parsees — that is, Persians. Most of their merchants live in the city of Bombay. For their numbers, the Parsees are the wealthiest race under British dominion in India, and the most intelligent and charitable. Throughout the commercial world their merchants have a high character for energy and honor.

In the seventh century before Christ the historic period of Persia began; but some of the monuments of its religion are of much older date. They are as old as any of the monuments of the religion of India, if they do not, in fact, transcend them all in antiquity, and reach near to the age of the primeval kingdoms of Egypt and Babylon. The Zend, the sacred language of Persia, and the most ancient dialect of the Sanscrit, the sacred language of India, are the same language.[1]

[1] Of Zend, Dr. Haug states, "Its relation to the most ancient Sanscrit, the so-called Vedic dialect, is as close as that of the different dialects of the Grecian language, Æolic, Ionic, Doric, and Attic, to each other." — Essays on

The language and traditions of these two countries prove, that at some very remote epoch there was, in a people of the same language, a division, caused in a measure by a divergence in religion,[1] and resulting in the formation of two peoples. One part of this ancient community kept more pure the truth revealed to

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the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsees, by Martin Haug, Dr. Phil., late of the Universities of Tübingen, Göttingen, and Bonn; Superintendent of Sanscrit Studies, and Professor of Sanscrit in the Poona College, Bombay. 1862, part ii. p. 117. Dr. Haug states that the Brahmins, who are perfectly acquainted with the classical Sanscrit, as he calls it, are unable to explain the more ancient parts of the Vedas; and that "there is no doubt the classical Sanscrit was formed long after the separation of the Iranians from the Hindus." — Part ii. pp. 117, 118. The Zend, he calls "the elder sister of the Sanscrit." — Part i. p. 17. Hardwick calls it "second, if not the eldest of the sister tongues which form the Indo-European family." He says, Purely philological reasons leave no doubt of the "protracted intercourse of Persians and Hindus, who clung together as a great community ages after the migrations of the Celt, the Teuton, and the Sclave across the bounds of Eastern Europe." — Christ and other Masters, by Charles Hardwick, Cambridge, England, 1862. Part iv. chap. iii. p. 147.

[1] The evidence of this is in facts, of which the following are specimens: "In all the Vedas, and in Brahminic literature, *Deva* is the name of the gods who are objects of worship to this day. In the Zendavesta, from its earliest to its latest parts, and even in modern Persian literature, *deva* — modern Persian, *div* — is the general name of an evil spirit or devil." — Dr. Haug, part iv. p. 225. In the Vedas, Indra is the highest of the gods, and a benevolent deity; with the Persians he is degraded in rank, and malevolent in character.

the fathers of mankind, the other corrupted it into a pantheistic nature-worship. The line of this division was the River Indus, and the Persians and the Hindoos its monuments.

This division was the final breaking up of that primæval family or tribe in Asia, from out of which, before this, had been the migrations of those, who, within the bounds of Europe, were to become the Greeks, the Romans, the Celts, the Teutons, and the Sclaves; in a word, the nations of Europe, in their long succession and varied development — migrations not within any historic period, but attested to have been out of the bosom of the same family by resemblances in their languages, through which the languages of Persia, of India, and of Europe have been classed together as one grand division of human speech, and called the Indo-Germanic, or Indo-European, or Aryan, or Japhetan languages — names, each of which strives to grasp and express the unity and diversity of this wonderful phenomenon; as in like manner, and with like cause, the languages of the Arabs, the Syrians, the Phœnicians, and the Hebrews are called Shemitic languages.

In a time, then, far beyond the reach of the usual appliances of human history, in a region somewhere in the heart of Asia, there appears the early vision of a family from which go forth, towards the east, the lords of India, and towards the west, the successive races that peopled Europe, and are now spreading over the Americas, and the expectant islands of the deep. I

know of no such far-reaching prospect in human history, of no higher summit of mortal vision, from which to survey the procession of the nations, the onwindings of the oceanic stream of life. This affiliation of nations, so far severed in space and time, so different in their tongues to the common ear, and so distinct in their histories, this affiliation that connects them into one division of the human race and disconnects them from the others, is a grand fact, that kindles the soul to thought. What was the religion of this family, before it broke up, to find such different destinies? What was its religion far away back in that early day, when the fathers of these unborn nations spoke one language? There is something in all the mythologies of this great family of the human race, suggesting that its religion, then, was the worship of God. Over all its idolatry broods the dim presence of some One higher and solitary Power; and to the ages gone, as to a fount of wiser inspiration, all these varied nations have looked back with dim, regretful memories. As their traditions are traced farther backwards, they more and more approximate towards the primeval facts recorded in the annals of our ancient and holy religion, and ever more and more appear the tokens of some early relation of the one only living and true God. Many and varied are the lines of evidence that point to this conclusion; but I find the decisive proof of the fact in the ancient religious monuments of the Persians, as connected with that struggle against idolatry which resulted in their existence as a people.

Zendavesta[1] is the name given to what remains of the religious records of the ancient Medes and Persians. It consists of a few hymns and prayers, and of one only of twenty-one books that contained their religious and scientific ideas. The Zendavesta, though but a fragment of an extensive literature, contains those parts of it most important for understanding the rise, genius, and history of the Persian religion. A few of its hymns and prayers are written in a dialect much older than the rest of it, and such changes appear in its language, and so many centuries were required for the formation of the literature to which it belonged, that the most ancient of its hymns were probably written at a time not much later than that of Moses. Some of the oldest of these hymns were composed by Zoroaster, and their age determines the period in which he lived.

This sage, whom Iran revered as her prophet, in the Zendavesta is styled Zarathrustra, — a word changed by the Romans into Zoroaster.[2] The Greeks and Romans took this for a proper name. It was the title of the High Priest of Iran. The Zoroaster of world-wide fame is distinguished in the Zendavesta by his family name, Spitama. His successors in office were thought to commune with God, as the Persians believed Zoroaster did; their sayings and doings were confounded by foreigners with his; and hence the uncertainty as to the

[1] This name indicates that the Book consists of a Text (Avesta), and a comment upon it (Zend).

[2] By the Greeks into *Zarastrades* and *Zoroastres*; by the Parsees into *Zerdosht*.

age in which he lived, and whether there were one, two, three, or more of the same name — questions long discussed among the learned.[1]

In forming a conception of any old religion, we almost, of necessity, conceive of it as it may have been at some one period, and so include in our conception of it features it may have had earlier or later. All the religions of old had changes from without and from within; but there were peculiar and great features of the Persian religion that were always the same. The Persians of old were not idolaters. They believed in a self-existent Creator of all good. His name was *Ahura-Mazda*, thought to mean the Living Creator of all — a name, in later Persian, contracted into *Ormazd*. The Persians conceived of another being, also self-existent, who was the creator of evil. His name was *Angromainyus*, in later Persian, *Ahriman*. Such a creed, strictly construed, held to two eternal powers; but, happily, it was inconsistent with its first principles. The good being was mightier than the evil being, and, in the end, was to destroy him.

Having a revelation of the spirituality of God, the Persian reared to him no temple, fashioned of him no image. He worshipped him before a flame of fire. Herodotus says, "the Persians held Fire to be a god;"[2] but this was not the belief of Iran. These words are from the oldest recorded utterance of her ancient faith,

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[1] Haug, part iii. sec. 27, p. 232; comp. 134.

[2] Herodotus, book iii. sec. 16.

from a creed, or prayer, or hymn — it is all three in one — of Zoroaster himself: "Blessed is he, blessed are all men, to whom the living, wise God, of his own command, should grant those two everlasting powers, — health of the soul, and immortality. For this very good, I beseech Thee, *Ahura-Mazda*, mayest thou, through thy angel of piety, give me happiness, the true good things, and the possession of the good mind. I believe Thee to be the best being of all; the source of Light for the world. Everybody shall choose Thee as the source of Light; Thee, holiest spirit. Thou greatest all good things. . . . I will believe Thee to be powerful, holy. For thou givest, with thy hand filled with helps, good to the pious man, as well as to the impious, by means of the warmth of the fire strengthening the good things."[1]

The Median usage of worshipping before a flame of fire may have, in part, originated in, and certainly in part is to be explained by, the Oriental, ancient idea of the *element*, Light. Of this essence, that which we call Light, was to the Persian but one of the various manifestations; Heat was another; and both were combined in the blaze of the fire. The invisible, universal, manifold element itself, he thought, in some way, pertained to God. Among the sayings ascribed by the Greeks to the Persians, it was said of God, "his body resembles Light, as his spirit resembles Truth." This reminds of what is written in the Divine Oracles:

[1] Gatha Ustavaiti, i. 1, 2, 4. Haug, p. 147.

God "covereth himself with light, as with a garment;"[1] "He dwelleth in light, which no man can approach unto."[2] The Persian thought this divine element was the media[3] of creative energy. *Ahura-Mazda* created, "through his inborn lustre, the multitude of the celestial luminaries."[4] It was the media of his omnipresent agency, — "by the warmth of the fire strengthening the good things" he had created.

Of this divine element, the gross, material fire on the Median altars was a symbol. To form this altar-fire, fires from sixteen places were brought together in one; fire generated by the rubbing together of two sticks of wood, fire from the kitchen, fire from steel-workers, glass-makers, potters, dyers, all the mechanics, and fire from a funeral pile. The corpse was pollution to a Mede or a Persian;[5] yet the fire, in which a dead body had been burned, was the most indispensable of all to the symbolical flame on the altar, for it was thought to have absorbed the fire in the human frame. Four was a perfect number, and the square of four filled out to perfection the fulness of the representative idea in the fire gathered from sixteen fires.[6] This collective fire

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[1] Psalms civ. 2. [2] 1 Tim. vi. 16.

[3] Gatha Ustavaiti, i. 1, 2, 4. Haug, p. 147.

[4] I use the plural intentionally, in view of the manifoldness of the element, — Light. Mark the expression, "Father of Lights." — James i. 17.

[5] The Vendidad, Fargard, v.–viii., contains minute directions for the treatment of a dead body. Running through these all is the idea of its utter impurity.

[6] The Vendidad, Fargard, viii. 73–96, contains directions

represented that element which is the unseen cause of all seeing, and of the heat, through which is the growth of the vegetable and animal worlds. The visible fire on the altar was a symbol of the invisible fire that pervaded and vivified all things, and was the life in nature. It represented a great and universal mystery, behind which was the mystery of mysteries; for that invisible fire was the *Shekinah* itself. Hence, the collective, mystic flame, purified by prayers said over it to God, was so sacred that it became impure if the direct rays, even of the sun, fell upon it.[1]

The Mede and the Persian thought that, through this

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for the preparation of the sacred Fire. The Parsees observe them at this day. The reason for the number is a conjecture of mine. Traces of a lost science or art of numbers, seem to run through Oriental, ancient thinking. Some of these appear in Holy Writ, alike in the books of Moses, learned in the wisdom of Egypt, and of Daniel, learned in the wisdom of Chaldea. Some of the thought of this lost art may be gathered here and there. Philo Judæus preserves something of this, as to the first seven numbers. Four, he says, is "a perfect number," and "preëminent in nature." He proposed to show its mystic powers, in full, in a special treatise. — On the World, secs. xiv. xv. xvi. xvii. Seneca tells how certain of the Magi, who chanced to be at Athens, where Plato died on his eighty-first birthday, were so struck with his perfect time-cycle, nine, the most perfect of numbers, multiplied into itself, or the square of nine, that they paid honors to him, as to one more than a mortal. — Ep. 58.

[1] Their *Atish-khudars*, houses for the sacred fire, are so constructed now by the Parsees, that the sun-rays cannot fall on the sacred fire.

sacred flame, God might reveal his truth to his true worshippers. Zoroaster said, "Standing at thy fire, among thy worshippers who pray to thee, I will be mindful of the truth;"[1] and he exhorted his disciples "to contemplate the beams of the fire with a most pious mind."[2] Standing thus himself, musing, praying, worshipping, his burning thoughts seemed to him kindled from the altar-blaze. "I will now tell you," he says, "you, who are assembled here, the wise sayings of the Most Wise, the praises of the Living God, and the songs of the good Spirit, the sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames."[3] This custom of worshipping before a flame was older than the time of Zoroaster. I think it may have originated in some old tradition of a revelation of God through a flame of fire, like to that Moses beheld in Midian.[4]

Ormazd said, "My light is concealed under all that shines;"[5] and hence the Persian, as he revered the sacred fire, revered also the sun, the moon, and every shining thing. This reverence, easily mistaken for idolatry, no doubt often became idolatrous. No doubt the Persians often confounded the media of the power of the omnipresent God — his symbols — with God himself.

It being a dogma of the Persian religion, that all the

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[1] Gatha Ustavaiti, i. 9. Haug, p. 148.

[2] Gatha Ahunavaiti, iii. 2. Haug, p. 151.

[3] The same, sec. i.

[4] Exodus iii. 1–6.

[5] Cited by Malcolm, as from the Zendavesta. Hist. of Persia, vol. i. ch. vii.

evil in the world was created by an evil being, all that was good was representative of the power and the glory of the good Being; and, through such things, the Creator might be worshipped.

The idea of the representative glory of God shining through what he had made, comes out in the Persian idea of a king. "I am," says Jamschid, in the *Shah-nameh*, "by the divine favor, both sovereign and priest." The Persian monarch was pontiff, as well as king. His palace was, in some sort, a temple; his court, a copy of that of Ormazd. In number, the great officers around his throne corresponded to the archangels in the courts on high. The King, exalted by the divine will to the dazzling preëminence of temporal and spiritual lord of the Persians, was to them an image of the power and glory of God. Something of this idea may be seen in the decree of Darius, that, for thirty days, no one should offer any petition to God or man, save to himself;[1] in the rule that no one, not even the Queen, might come before the King, in his palace, unbidden, and live, unless he held out the golden sceptre;[2] and, in this, that the laws of the King, like the laws of God, altered not. In the Persian sense of the word, the King was worshipped. Plutarch, in his life of Themistocles, says, "None durst appear before the King, without prostrating themselves on the ground." Nor did they exact this only from their own vassals, but also from foreign ministers and ambassadors; the captain of

[1] Daniel vi. 4–9.

[2] Esther iv. 10, 11.

the guard being charged to inquire of those who asked admittance to the king, whether they were ready to adore him. This is explained by what Artabanus said to Themistocles: "Among the many excellent laws of ours, the most excellent is this, that the king is to be honored and worshipped religiously, as the image of that God which conserveth all things."

According to the Persian creed, Ormazd was the creator of light, Ahriman of darkness; and the never-ceasing war of light and darkness, the true image of the conflict between them. To take part in this conflict, Ormazd created six archangels, Ahriman, six demons; the one, legions of messengers of light, the other, of emissaries of darkness.

The Persian religion discerned the superhuman origin of the evil there is in the world; and that God wages against it real, unceasing, and at last, victorious war. It predicted that in the end a Redeemer would come to do away with death, and to raise the dead. It taught the Persian, that if he approved himself on the side of the Good Being, by good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, he himself, both body and soul, should share in his triumphs.

In proof of some of these statements as to the religion of the Persians, I cite Scripture, whose date is prior to the birth of the founder of the Persian empire. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do

all My pleasure: calling a ravenous bird[1] from the East, the man[2] that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."[3]

"I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; . . . that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."[4]

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create

[1] The Persian eagle. See note on p. 57.
[2] Cyrus. [3] Isa. xlvi. 9, 10, 11. [4] Isa. xliv. 24, 28.

darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." [1]

These words prove Schlegel's assertion, that in the Bible the Persians are not classed with heathen nations. For Cyrus is called the Lord's "shepherd" and the Lord's "anointed," which is evidence that he was a worshipper of God; and this is certain, when it is said the Lord will strengthen the right hand of his anointed to subdue the "nations;" for the term rendered "nations" means the heathen, or worshippers of idols, in strict opposition to the Israelites.

Yet the Lord said to Cyrus, "Thou hast not known me;" from which it is to be inferred, that although Cyrus was no idol-worshipper, his idea of God was imperfect, erroneous, or contradictory; and as the words following — "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside me," — are naturally taken as referring to those that precede, there is in them evidence of the divinity of *Ahriman* in the Persian creed. When this is said again, it is followed by words manifestly pointed against this doctrine of the Persian religion: "I form the light, and create the darkness. I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things."

The fact so strongly inferred from Scripture, that the Persian religion held to two Creators, is clearly proved by the first two of the five small collections of hymns in the Zendavesta, called *Gathas*. These were written

[1] Isa. xlv. 1–7.

by Zoroaster. He says, "In the beginning, there were a pair of twins; two spirits, each with a peculiar activity: these are the good and the base, in thought, word, and deed. And these two spirits created material things; the one the reality, the other the non-reality. Of these two spirits, you must choose the one, either the evil, the originator of the worst actions, or the true, holy spirit."[1] Here, the idea of two Creators, each the antithesis of the other, is expressed with a clearness beyond contradiction. In the last three Gathas the idea is different. This inquiry is addressed to God: "Art Thou not He in whom is hidden the last cause of both intellects, good and base?" — and the Creator of good and evil is said to be one and the same.

These words may have come from Zoroaster's disciples; their first, but not their last, attempt to reduce his system to pure Monotheism. If from the sage himself, they prove that his thoughts were inconsistent; that in vain attempts to change faith into philosophy, to solve the problem of evil, whose solution is beyond the powers of man, and which God hath not revealed, he became bewildered, and contradicted himself. Or, it may be these darkened utterances repeat but what he had heard. It may be he did not originate that Dualism, which was the greatest error in the creed of Iran, but he did sanction it; and his creed, if judged only by this dogma, must be condemned as worse than that of the

[1] Gatha Ahunavait, iii. 3, 4. Haug, p. 142.

heathen. But the religion of the intellect and of the heart are not just the same. The heart of Zoroaster forbade him to follow out his creed to its consequences; and he seemed to have given to the spirit, from whom he believed that evil originated, divine attributes, without clearly seeing they were such. For, in his sayings, — and so, too, in the Zoroastrian religion, — *Ahriman* is really an inferior power. He says, "Wisdom is the shelter from lies, the annihilation of the destroyer," — that is, of the evil spirit.[1] His allusions to *Ahriman* are chiefly in exhortations to withstand his assaults: "Those who are opposed in their thoughts, words, and actions to the wicked, and think only of the welfare of creation, their efforts will be crowned with success through the mercy of *Ahura-Mazda*."[2]

It would seem that the fearful dogma of an evil being, ever creating evil, would have made the religion of the Persians gloomy and despairing. It might have been so in the forests of Scandinavia, but it was not beneath the brilliant sky of Iran. It might have been so among some races, but by nature "the Persians are the most cheerful people in the world."

Something of this must be ascribed to the piety of Zoroaster. The dogma of an evil creator was so disarmed of its overshadowing terror by his trust in God, that although it ever remained an article in the creed of the religion which revered him as its prophet, that religion was of good cheer, and alone, of the religions

[1] Gatha Ahunavaiti, iii. 10. Haug, p. 143.

[2] Gatha Ahunavaiti, iv. 322. Haug, p. 145.

of the world, looked forward with hope. Zoroaster's words are the accents of a soul inquiring after God, elevated, strengthened, purified by contemplation of Him, and by the assurance of immortal righteousness. They show him to have been a child-like lover of God, whom he calls "the living, the faithful, the generous, the holy."

"That will I ask of Thee, tell it me right, Thou living God! who was, in the beginning, the Father and Creator of truth. Who made of the sun and stars the way? Who causes the moon to increase and wane if not Thou? This I wish to know, except what I already know.

"That will I ask of Thee, tell it me right, Thou living God! who is holding the earth and the skies above it? Who made the waters, and the trees of the field? Who is in the wind and storms that they so quickly run? Who is the creator of the good-minded beings, Thou Wise?

"That will I ask Thee, tell it me right, Thou Living God. Who made the lights of good effect, and the darkness? Who made the sleep of good effect, and the activity? Who made morning, noon, and night, reminding always the priest of his duties?

"When my eyes beheld Thee, the Essence of Truth, the Creator of Life, who manifests his life in his works, then I knew Thee to be the primeval spirit — Thou Wise, so high in mind as to create the world, and the father of the good mind.

"I believe in Thee as the Holy God, Thou living

Wise! because I beheld Thee to be the primeval cause of life in the creation. For Thou hast made holy customs and words. Thou hast given emptiness to the base, and good to the good man. I will believe in Thee, Thou glorious God! in the last period of creation."[1]

He met in this world the treatment given to all of whom the world is not worthy: "To what country shall I go? Where shall I take my refuge? What country is sheltering the master and his companion? None of the servants pay reverence to me, nor the wicked rulers of the country. How shall I worship Thee further, Living Wise?

"I know that I am helpless. Look at me being amongst few men, for I have but few men, I implore Thee, weeping, Thou Living God, who grantest happiness as a friend gives a present to a friend. The good of the good mind is in Thy own possession, Thou True."[2]

These few broken words shadow forth much of the unknown of his history. These reveal the hope that cheered him. "Let us be such as help the life of the future. . . . *The prudent man wishes only to be there, where wisdom is at home.* . . All perfect things are garnered up in the splendid residence of the Angel of

[1] These are sentences from the first two Gathas — choice sentences, that give much too high an idea of the general character of the Zendavesta.

[2] Gatha Ustavaiti, iv. 1, 2.

Righteousness, the Angel of Wisdom, the Angel of Truth."[1]

In the fragments of the sayings of Zoroaster there is no clear trace of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; yet the Persians seem to have found there its germ, at least; for they gave, as a name to the renovation of all things, in which they believed the dead would arise, a phrase of Zoroaster's —"the perpetuation of life."

In the Zendavesta it is foretold that Sosiosh, a great prophet, commissioned by Ahura-Mazda to restore and make all things new, "shall slay death,"[2] and that "in his time the dead will rise."[3]

The angels of Zoroaster are personifications of the divine attributes rather than real beings, with the exception of Serosh, the angel of the religion of Iran. In after times, each abstraction of the mind, each faculty of the soul, each animate and inanimate thing, was thought to have its spirit or genius, and each human being his angel. The old Persian walked, attended by a multitude of spirits of light or of spirits of darkness. To good spirits, veneration was given; many of them were invoked with prayer; and some angels of high rank were so invested with titles and honors of gods of other nations, as to give rise to the assertion, that the Persians had adopted them.

As the mysterious element, Light, pervaded everything in the good creation, every such thing might be

[1] Gatha Ahunavaiti, iii. 9, 10.

[2] Vendidad. Fargard, xix.

[3] Zemyad yasht.

an object of reverence, and reverence was especially given to the four elements, to the sun, to the moon, and every shining thing. This recondite idea, together with the belief that everything in the good creation had its genius or angel, which might be invoked with prayer, often made their religion unintelligible to the heathen of old, who interpreted its creed by their own.

Gibbon says, "The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners; . . . but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of the Persian worship. 'That people,' says Herodotus, 'rejects the use of temples, of altars, and of statues, and smiles at the folly of those nations who imagine that the gods are sprung from, or bear any affinity with, the human nature. The tops of the highest mountains are the places chosen for sacrifices. Hymns and prayers are the principal worship; the Supreme God, who fills the wide circle of heaven, is the object to whom they are addressed.' Yet, at the same time, in the true spirit of a Polytheist, he accuses them of adoring earth, water, fire, the winds, and the sun and moon. But Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct which might appear to give a color to it. The elements, and more particularly the sun, whom they called *Mithra*, were the objects of their religious reverence, because they considered them as the purest symbols, the noblest productions, and the most powerful agents of the Divine Power and nature."[1]

[1] Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. viii.

Missionaries bring the same charge against the Parsees now; and it is answered by them in the same way. The Parsees revere Zoroaster as their prophet; they receive the Zendavesta as their sacred book; their rites are those of their ancestors; their creed expresses the Persian religion of old, in its purest form; therefore I cite part of a Catechism appended to the Book of Prayer, now used by the Parsees in India.

"We believe in only one God; and do not believe in any beside him. *Question.* Who is that one God? *Answer.* The God who created the heavens and the earth, the angels, the stars, the sun, the moon, the fire, the water, or all the four elements, and all things in the two worlds: that God we believe in; Him we invoke, and Him we adore. *Ques.* What is the form of our God? *Ans.* Our God has neither face, nor form, color, nor shape, nor fixed place. There is no other like Him. He is himself singly, such a glory that we cannot describe Him, nor our mind comprehend Him. *Ques.* What is our religion? *Ans.* Our religion is the worship of God. *Ques.* Whence did we receive our religion? *Ans.* From God's true prophet, the true Zoroaster. He brought our religion for us from God. *Ques.* Where should I turn my face when worshipping the holy Ormazd. *Ans.* We should worship the holy, just Ormazd, with our face toward some of his creations of light, glory, and brightness. *Ques.* What are those things? *Ans.* Such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire, water, and such things of glory. To such things we should turn our face, because God has be-

stowed upon them a small spark of His true glory; and they are, therefore, more exalted in the creation, and fit to represent to us this power and glory. *Ques.* Among the creation of Ormazd, which is the most exalted? *Ans.* The great prophet is the most exalted; and that prophet is the excellent Zoroaster; none is higher than he; the height of dignity culminates in him, because he is the most honored and beloved of God. *Ques.* If we commit any sin, will our prophet save us? *Ans.* Never commit any sin under that faith; because our prophet, our guide, has distinctly commanded you shall receive according to what you do. If you do virtuous and pious actions, your reward shall be heaven. If you sin, and do wicked things, your reward shall be hell. There is none save God, that can save you from the consequences of your sins. If you repent of your sins and reform, and the Great Judge consider you worthy of pardon, or would be merciful to you, He alone can and will save you. *Ques.* What are those things by which man is blessed and benefited. *Ans.* To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers. *Ques.* What are those things by which man is lost or degraded? *Ans.* To tell untruths, to steal, to gamble, to commit treachery, to abuse, to be angry, to wish ill to another, to be proud, to mock, to be idle, to slander, to be avaricious, to take what is another's property, to be revengeful, unclean,

envious, to be superstitious, and to do any other wicked action."

The religion of the Parsees seems to be an imperfect, rather than an untrue religion. It is a relic of the religion of the primeval age, essentially the same as that of the book of Job. From it we see, that for more than three thousand years there has been no enlargement or development of religious truth, save in the line of the prophecies fulfilled in the coming of the Lord, and in the truth by him revealed.

Missionaries allege that in the Parsee religion now, there is an intermixture of superstition and idolatry; and certainly there was in the religion of the Persians of old. This is proved by the vision of Ezekiel, near the time of Cyrus the Great, when the Persian religion was less corrupt than it was afterwards. The prophet beheld, in the Lord's house in Jerusalem, "creeping things and abominable beasts" — the gods of the Egyptians; he beheld Hebrew "women weeping for Tammuz" — the Phœnician worship of Adonis; and, "in the inner court of the Lord's house, between the porch and the altar," priests, with their backs towards the temple of the Lord, and their faces towards the east," and "they worshipped the sun," after the manner of the Magi.[1] This fixes the brand of idol-worship on the Magi, leaving no doubt that in their religion, even as in that of the Hebrews in Ezekiel's time, there was a fearful intermixture of idolatry with the worship of the God of Heaven.

[1] Ezekiel, ch. viii.

In the Persian religion there is some confirmation of the fact, that the Pilgrims to Jerusalem were Persians; for the religious veneration of the Persians for their King is the starting-point in the full explanation of their worship of the Young Child. In the Old Testament, worship often means respect paid by an inferior person to a superior, in the Oriental fashion of bowing or falling to the ground; but in the New Testament, with hardly an exception, it means honor due only to God. Thus, when Cornelius would have worshipped St. Peter in this fashion, he restrained him, saying, "I am myself a Man."[1] In a like case, the angel said to St. John, Worship God."[2] "The four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth forever and ever."[3] When Satan said, "If thou wilt fall down and worship me," our Lord answered, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."[4] And in St. Matthew this word must have this meaning, for it is the word he uses, when he says, that after the Resurrection the disciples worshipped Jesus, when he "came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

As to the worship the Magi paid to Christ, this great difficulty arises: it is very strange they should receive a truth received with difficulty, even by the disciples of

[1] Acts x. 25, 26.
[2] Rev. xix. 10.
[3] Rev. v. 14.
[4] Matt. iv. 9, 10.
[5] Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

the Master, at a late day, and after many proofs of his divinity. The explanation of the marvel is, *in part*, given in what has been said of the Persian idea of a King. To a Persian, his king was so representative of God, that to his Oriental imagination, he seemed the brightness of his glory and the image of his person. The Persian Pilgrims brought with them to Bethlehem something of this idea of a King. This would have led them to worship, in the Persian sense of the word, the King they sought and found; but their pure belief in him as a spiritual Lord, and the new Star, the sign of his super-terrestrial glory, that led to his presence, raised their idea of him high above that of a king of the earth, and prepared them to recognize his true, essential divinity.

Their divinely-appointed recognition of the divinity of the Lord, made before the time, and producing on the instant only a religious awe and wonder in those who heard of it, and made outside of the house of Israel, corresponds to earlier revelations of the same fact made within the house of Israel by the prophets, which so rise above the idea of the Messiah that prevailed in Israel at his birth. In either case, it was the sun shining for an instant through clouds it was not till long after to dispel from the face of heaven.

It having been proved that the Pilgrims to Jerusalem were Persians, an inquiry as to that Pilgrimage is an inquiry as to an event in the lives of the wisest and best of the disciples of Zoroaster; therefore I have painted the Zoroastrian religion in the brightest colors

it would bear; but however much the shadows in the picture may be darkened, it will still be more credible that the Pilgrims St. Matthew describes were believers in that than in any other religion. For the great truth, that God is waging a real and universal war with Evil, inclined its pious believers to watch earnestly to discern, anywhere and everywhere, signs of his presence and manifestations of his power. And, besides this, — the central idea, the animating principle of this religion, — there was a belief, also, peculiar to it, that looks like one of the links of the chain we are trying to lay hold of and to trace. It has often been said that all nations looked back to a golden age, but none, save the Hebrews, looked forward to one — a most instructive word; but to it the Persians are the exception. They believed that in the final triumph of the Good Being the earth would be redeemed. In the Zendavesta there is a fragment of a very old epic song, in which it is foretold to Ahriman, that for the destruction of idol-worshippers, Sosiosh shall be born out of the water Kacoya, in the east country.[1] This seems to be a reference to one well known, rather than an announcement of one unheard of before. In another place it is said, this "hero will arise out of the number of the prophets;" "a mighty brightness," peculiar to Iranian worthies of oldest time, "will shine around him," — a mighty brightness, created by Ahura-Mazda in the beginning, and the instrument by which Sosiosh would accomplish his mission. This mission would be to

[1] Vendidad. Fargard, xix.

make "Life everlasting, undecaying, imperishable, incorruptible, forever existing, forever vigorous, at the time when the dead shall rise again." Then, it is said, "imperishableness of life will exist; and all the world will remain for eternity in a state of purity."[1]

The germ of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is the promise his mercy gave to the mother of all human kind. Are these words of the Persian religion a far-off echo of that promise? They are not among the very oldest utterances of that religion. But of those, only broken voices are now heard; and whence came the Persian worship of one God? No people ever became idolaters, and of their own accord came back to his worship. The Persian worship of God, then, must have come down to them from the time of Noah. But, as they kept the truth of the Unity of God, transmitted to them from before the Flood, why not some reminiscence of the promise of a Redeemer? It is possible their hope originated in the belief in the Messiah, preserved by the Hebrews; it is possible it originated in some earnest soul, kindling to ecstasy as it mused on the war of Ormazd with Ahriman. It is possible both may have concurred in giving outline and color to some faint and far reminiscence, till it reached its final, definite, and grand form; and such, it seems to me probable, was the genesis and growth of this Persian oracle; for, when it is remembered that the appearance of the Persians, as a people, was consequent upon their clinging to old truth from which others were falling away; that their

[1] Zemyad Yasht.

sacred traditions resemble the facts recorded in Genesis more than do those of any other people; that parts of their sacred writings may be as old as the age of Moses, and that, in them, they look back to a sacred antiquity; there seems much wisdom in the opinion of the learned Hyde, that the Persians "semper ab ipso diluvio veri Dei cultum tenuisse" — ever kept, even from the flood, the worship of the true God.

In searching for a cause of a pilgrimage of Magi to Jerusalem, it is encouraging to find in their sacred books a prediction of a Redeemer to come. We must inquire farther why they gave to such a hope a local habitation outside of the land and the race of Iran; but, if there was some relation between the Iranian hope and the first promise to man, there was a divine appropriateness in the fulfilling of that promise, when Magi, whose symbol of the Evil One was a serpent, fell down and worshipped "the Seed of the Woman."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAGI.

With the fact that the Pilgrims to Bethlehem were Persians, the religion of Persia agrees better than would that of any other ancient country — Rome, Greece, or Egypt, for instance — with the notion that they came from thence; and so, too, the character of the Magi agrees better with the fact that these Pilgrims were Magi, than would the character of any other ancient priesthood with the notion that they belonged to them.

The history of the Magi is very imperfect, but the testimony to their character, given in many brief references to them, is so much in their favor, as to make up on this point for the loss of the classical treatises that spake at length, or especially, concerning them.[1] Thus, Philo Judæus "deplores the deficiency of wisdom

[1] The writers of these were Ctesias (B. C. 400), physician to King Artaxerxes; Deinon (B. C. 340); Theopompus of Chios (B. C. 350), who, in the eighth book of his History of Philip of Macedon, treated of the Magi; and Hermippos (B C. 350), who also wrote of them. References to, and fragments of their works, are to be found in Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, and Pliny. Haug thinks Hermippos had read the books of the Magi.

in the human race, the slackness in the pursuit of those objects to which we ought to hasten eagerly, the indolence through which the seeds of virtue perish; while for those things which we ought to forego, we show an insatiate longing; whence it is that the earth is full of men who indulge in all kinds of pleasure, while the number of the prudent and just is small;" and then says, "still, there are some virtuous and honorable men: of such, among the Persians, are the Magi; who, investigating the works of nature for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the truth, become initiated themselves, and initiate others in the divine virtues."[1] Thus, in the Wisdom of Solomon, it seems to be said of the Magi, "They seek for God; being conversant in His works, they search for Him diligently."[2]

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[1] Philo. Quod omnis probus liber; sec. xi.

[2] Chap. xiii. 7. Here might be cited Justin Martyr, who says of the priests of Mithra, — Mithraism was a late and corrupt phase of the Zoroastrian religion, — "They teach the practice of what is just and right" (Dialogue with Trypho, sec. lxx.), though with the zeal of a new convert, and uttering the Christian opinion of his time, he refers this to the subtilty of evil spirits, who, in this and like cases, he thinks, counterfeited the good that really was in the true religion alone.

Of heathen writers, Plato, in the passage referred to in note on p. 98, leaves on the mind a good impression as to the Magi. Diogenes Laertius, in his History, if so it may be called, of Ancient Philosophy, says, "The Magi discourse to the people concerning justice." i. 6. So, too, Dion Chrysostom, Oratio Borysthenica. Apuleius says, "The religion of the Magi is acceptable to the immortal

The name Magi comes from a word found in one of the most ancient hymns of the Zendavesta. "Kava Vistaspa" — the royal friend of Zoroaster — "obtained, through the possession of the spiritual power (Maga), and through the verses which the good mind had revealed, that knowledge which the Living Wise, himself the cause of truth, had invented."[1] The same word, also, appears in a name given in the Zendavesta to the earliest disciples of Zoroaster. "Zarathustra assigned in times of yore to the Magavash Paradise."[2] Hence, not inappropriately, was the name Magi given by the Greeks to those who, from immemorial time, had been priests of the Persians.[3] Like the names Persia and Zoroaster, it originated in a Persian word; but, like them, it is a European name.

Among the Persians there could be no religious

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gods, pious undoubtedly, and divinely wise." Of much the same import is what is said of the Persian Magi by the Greek grammarians, Hesychius and Suidas, who define them much in the same way, the last as "lovers of wisdom and servants of God."

[1] Gatha, iii. 51, 16. [2] The same, 15.

[3] Prof. Plumptre, article *Magi*, Smith's Dictionary, says, "The word Magi does not appear in the Zendavesta." This should be compared with the citations above. Westergaard says, "Their name occurs twice only in all the extant Zend texts." Haug, b. iii. sec. 8, p. 160, in a note on "Magavash," see above, says, "This is the original form of Magi. Its form in the cuneiform inscriptions is Magush. According to this verse, it seems to have denoted the followers of Zoroaster." In the Zendavesta, the word for priests is Atharvan, guardians of the fire.

service without the presence of one of the Magi.[1] The learned heads of the order had the charge of the education of the monarch.[2] They were judges and counsellors of state. The Magi were diviners, astrologers, and interpreters of dreams.[3] They searched into the secrets of future time. They professed to utter the will of God. The order was to Persia, what Delphos was to Greece. It was the Persian oracle.

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[1] Without one of the Magi, it is not lawful for the Persians to sacrifice. — Herodotus, i. 132. The Magi are employed in worshipping the gods by prayers and sacrifices, as if their worship alone would be accepted. — Diogenes Laertius, i. 6. According to this writer, their dress was white, their habits ascetic, and they lived on a vegetable diet.

[2] Plato states, that the education of the Persian prince was intrusted to the four of the Persians who severally excelled in wisdom, justice, temperance, and fortitude. The first of these taught him the *mageia* of Zoroaster, by which is meant the worship of the gods, and likewise the art of kingly government. The second taught him to be true in word and deed through his whole life. The third to govern his appetites instead of being their slave. The fourth taught him to be fearless and brave, since he who fears is a slave. — Alcibiades, 37.

[3] Herodotus relates several instances of this. One is as follows: A vision appeared to Xerxes in his sleep, which the Magi, when they heard it, interpreted to relate to the whole world, and to signify that all mankind should serve him. The vision was as follows: Xerxes imagined that he was crowned with the sprig of an olive tree, and that branches from this olive covered the whole earth; and that afterwards the crown that was placed on his head disappeared. — vii. 19.

In the loss of all but one of the books of the Zendavesta,[1] it is impossible to form a full and clear idea of science of the Magi. But the art of the Persians, as shown in architecture, sculpture, gem-engraving, coins, and utensils, seems not to have fallen short of that of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or the Egyptians; and their leading scientific ideas, no doubt, were those essentially common to the scientific thought of the earliest cycle of civilization. If so, they held that the forms of all material things are but the protean changes in one and the same primordial substance, produced by

[1] In its largest compass of meaning, the word Zendavesta denotes a priestly literature that was the growth of centuries. It resembled the Talmud of the Jews. Its twenty-one books, or *nosks*, set forth the religious traditions, opinions, rites, and ceremonies of the Medes and Persians, and also their philosophical and scientific notions. The table of its contents is still extant, and is as follows: B. I. Praise and Worship of the Angels. II. Prayers and Instructions as to good actions, chiefly those to induce one to assist a fellow-man. III. On Abstinence, Piety, Religion, the qualities of Zoroaster. IV. An Explanation of Religious Duties. On the Orders and on Commandments of God. Obedience in Man. How to guard against Hell, and how to reach Heaven. V. On the Knowledge of this and the other Life. Qualities of the Inhabitants of the other Worlds. Revelations as to Heaven, Earth, Water, Trees, Fire, Men and Beasts. On the Resurrection of the Dead, and the crossing *chinvat* (i. e. the bridge over which the soul passed into heaven). VI. On Astronomy, Geography, Astrology. VII. On the Reward in the next World for observing the two chief Festivals. VIII. Of Kings, High-priests. What Fishes are Ormazd's and what Ahriman's. A Geographical

the play of one and the same force; and their aim was to pierce through the forms to the substance, and in its changes, to grasp that mysterious principle that ever eluded them in its rapid transformations. Hence their science dealt with the occult, the magical, or, at least, the mysterious; yet, its main ideas were those to which the inductive science of the modern world seems to be slowly working its cautious and toilsome way, to prove which seems now the far-off goal of its farthest aspiration; and Sir Walter Raleigh may have been right when he said, "A magician, according to the Persian

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Section. IX. A Code for Kings and Governors. On Workmanship of various Kinds. On the Sin of Lying. X. On Metaphysics, Natural Philosophy, Divinity. XI. On the Reign of Gustasp, his Conversion to Religion, and its Propagation by him throughout the World. XII. The Nature of the Divine Being. The Zoroastrian Faith; Duties enjoined by it. On Obedience due to the King. On Rewards for good Actions in the other World, and how to be saved from Hell. The Structure of the World, Agriculture, Botany. On the Classes of the Nation, Rulers, Warriors, Agriculturists, Traders, and Workmen. XIII. On the Miracles of Zoroaster. XIV. On Human Life, from its Birth up to its End, and to the Day of Resurrection. On the Causes of Man's Birth; why some are born in Wealth, others in Poverty. XV. The Praise of angel-like Men. XVI Code of Laws, what is allowed and what prohibited. XVII. Medicine, Astronomy, Midwifery. XVIII. On Marriage between near Relatives, Zoölogy and Treatment of Animals. XIX. Civil and Criminal Laws, Boundaries of Countries. On the Resurrection. XX. On the Removal of Uncleanness, from which great Defects arise in the World. XXI. On the Creation; its Wonders and Structures.

word, is no other than *Divinorum cultor et interpres*, a studious observer and expounder of divine things, and that art itself (I mean the art of natural magic) no other *quam naturalis philosophiæ absoluta consummatio*, than the absolute perfection of natural philosophy."

The word Magic, common to many languages, is curious evidence that the Magi sometimes abused their propensity to search into mysterious things. Pliny says, "Beyond all doubt in Persia, from Zoroaster, as all authors agree, arose magic — *fraudulentissima artium* — the most delusive of arts." But he admits that it was born of the medical art, and made its way *velut altiorem sanctioremque medicinam* — "as a very high and sacred art of healing;" and that it blended with it "natural philosophy and religion, and so bound men in a triple chain."[1]

Magic arts are as old as superstition. Where the one was in the ancient world — and it was everywhere — there was the other. The Magi were from immemorial time. Their rites were conversant with the secrets of nature, and with spirits, genii, and angels. Hence magic was thought to have originated with them. But assuredly they did not originate the magic of Egypt, or of India. Their invocations of the elements, of the powers of nature, of beneficent spirits, genii, or angels, was white magic, resorted to to counteract the power of demons. Black magic — evil spells, wicked enchantments, invocation of devils, marked the

[1] See Pliny's Nat. Hist., lib. xxx.

followers of Ahriman, and were forbidden in the Zendavesta.

The moral pre-eminence of the Magi above the ancient heathen priesthoods was chiefly owing to the spirituality of the Zoroastrian religion. Into its other causes it is in vain to inquire minutely. Something of it must have been due to the providential ordering of events in the unknown of their history; something to earnest and good men, whose record on earth has perished; and it may have been in part owing to the fact that, unlike the other ancient nations, the Medes and Persians had no grand and imposing system of temple-worship. For, like the castles of the nobles in the Dark Ages, the temples of the heathen priesthoods were the strongholds by means of which they gained and kept much of their power. The shrine, hallowed by the present god, lent them something of its awe-inspiring power, and this power they were tempted to maintain and augment by artifice and trick. Herodotus says the Persians had no temples.[1] This has been denied, but from his point of view he was right. He was thinking of shrines enriched with the gifts of kings, the wealth of nations, with choirs of ministering priests, and throngs of devotees; of vast edifices, such as he had seen in all his travels in Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Babylon; — a fire-chapel, with no images, no array of robed priests, no crowd of worshippers, no imposing ceremonial, he did not think a Temple.[2]

[1] Herodotus, book i. 131.

[2] This idea is very well illustrated, as well as confirmed

The high religious function of the Persian monarch, and the free genius of the people — of all Asiatics the least likely to become the slaves of their priests — repressed in the Magi that insatiate lust for power which led the priesthood in some ancient nations to attempt to overawe the throne, and to enslave the popular mind.[1] The Magi had no element of power for personal ends like the shrine of Delphos, or of Thebes. Like the Jews, at times, they were infected with idolatry; they were guilty of some dark and cruel deeds; their religion had a tinge of element worship, a taint of polytheism; yet from superstitious and idolatrous practices, they could draw little power compared with the priests of other nations. Their temptations were less, their faith was more spiritual.

As there is in the character of each nation something, often very undefinable, that differentiates it from that of every other nation, so there is in the great religious orders of the ancient world, — as there is in those of Christendom. This may be owing to an evident excess or deficiency in some common element, to some well-known national trait, or to something peculiar in origin,

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by this sentence from Fraser's History of Persia, ch. iv. "The Parsees have no temples. The Atish-Khudars are merely edifices for guarding the sacred fire from defilement or pollution."

[1] Under Smerdis the Magi seem to have made one grand effort in that direction, and afterwards to have rested in their appropriate calling.

history, or aim, and so at once be clear to the mind; but oftentimes this element of difference is an intangible, an almost inexpressible, thing, for our first clear perception of which we may be as much indebted to chance, as to patience of thought, — as we sometimes mark what we are looking to find, by a glance of the eye in the midst of diligent searching. It may be felt rather than known, but a difference there always is; no two are just alike; and this distinguishing difference is usually their most valuable or interesting characteristic. What, then, was the distinguishing characteristic of the Magi?

In all the religious orders of the ancient heathen world, there was somewhat of a scientific and of a philosophic spirit. Their temples were colleges, as well as shrines. The Magi, also, were learned; but their spirit was not distinctively the scientific. They were philosophers; but their spirit was not distinctively the philosophical. Science seeks for law in natural phenomena, and, finding this, seeks no further. Philosophy seeks for abstract truth, a mere notion of the mind. There is a spirit that avails itself of science and philosophy for an end beyond either; a spirit that would pierce into the secrets of the Being who is above nature, and who gives to truth, reality. Something of this spirit was the distinguishing characteristic of the Magi. In nature they ever sought for revelations of the supernatural; in human affairs, of the superhuman.

Now this spirit may be in alliance with that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, or with unhallowed presumption. It may seek for God in the spirit of Babel or of Bethel, of Balaam or of Elijah. There is no sufficient evidence of holiness of heart in thoughts that "wander through eternity," aspiring to the highest mysteries. They are evidence only of a sensitiveness to spiritual impressions. They are the outworkings of a temperament that may determine either to superstition or to reverence, that may belong to a wizard, or to a prophet. And no doubt, there would be abounding evidence of this in the history of the order of the Magi, were it as complete as it is, and ever must be, imperfect.

The Magi were priests of the most philosophical and profound of the religions of the world; yet from the first, and at their best estate, there must have been two tendencies at work in them, — for such is the nature of man — one towards the earthly, one towards the spiritual. During their comparative depression, while the Persians were ruled by alien tribes, and their religion was losing much of its simplicity and purity, both may have grown intense; so that when the coming of the Redeemer drew nigh, as among the Jews, so among the Magi, the few may have grown more spiritual, as the many grew more earthly.

But there were then on earth, none, from whom so appropriately might have come the witnesses of the grace of God to all the earth. As there was an ele-

ment of faith in the religion and science of the Magi, as in the realms of matter and of spirit they sought for the divine, as some of them aimed at dominion over nature, though with impossible aspirations, yet with good ends, it accords with the harmonies of the Kingdom of Grace, that God led Magi to THE TRUE MAGICIAN.

CHAPTER V.

PERSIANS, CHALDEANS, AND HEBREWS.

THOUGH Asia is distinguished from Europe by enthusiasm, though it has ever been a land of seers and prophets, true or false, a land of vows, and shrines and pilgrimages; though the long sanctity of Jerusalem made it — *longe clarissima urbium Orientis, non Judeæ modo*[1] — by far the most illustrious city, not of Judea only, but of all Syria; yet a Persian pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be wanting in historic credibility, if the Persians knew nothing of the Hebrews: on the other hand, if they knew them well, or even nations well acquainted with them, then, in view of the Hebrew prevision of the Messiah, such a pilgrimage is possible.

Of the countries west of the Euphrates neither the Persians nor the Medes could have had much, if any, personal knowledge, before the wars that resulted in the Persian Empire. These opened the Magian mind to foreign influences, and enlarged its circle of thought. They brought the Magi in contact with races, among whom there were sacred traditions of high antiquity; and a word or two, as to some facts of this kind, may

[1] Pliny, Nat. Hist. lib. v. 15.

well introduce what I have to say of their acquaintance with the Hebrews.

The earlier conquests of the Medes, and afterwards of the Persians, led them into the Great Plain of the Tigris and the Euphrates. One of the earliest permanent settlements of the human race was in that ever-afterwards historic Plain; and somewhere between those Rivers was the cradle of the Hebrew race: — as language witnesses, — for one of the languages of that region, the Aramaic, was like that of the Hebrews, and, in the time of their Captivity, it became the language spoken by them. There the sacred traditions that crossed the Flood, came down in an unbroken line to their great Ancestor; and there "in Mesopotamia, in the land of the Chaldeans, the God of glory appeared unto Abraham."[1]

As the sacred memories known to him — the same written in the early chapters of Genesis — were not lost in his family in its long sojourn in Egypt, why should they have been wholly lost, for a long time, in Chaldea? Abraham's father, Terah, and brother, Nachor, "served other gods;"[2] but this is not altogether inconsistent with their retaining much of primal tradition; and the notion that they were utterly given over to idolatry, agrees not with Abraham's saying, in his old age, to "the eldest servant of his house, go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."[3]

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[1] See Acts vii. 2, 4. [2] Joshua xxiv. 2.
[3] Gen. xxiv. 2, 4.

Isaac, too, in his old age, sent Jacob to the forefathers' land; and there, all the Fathers of the Twelve Tribes save one, were born.

The children of Abraham dwelt far westward of "the land of their kindred;" and, for a long time, it is seen no more on the sacred page; but when seen again, it is instructive to mark the appearing of something hinting affinity between the people by the rivers of Mesopotamia, and the Hebrews. To a man of Gath-hepher, of the tribe of Zebulon, a dweller by what was afterwards called the Sea of Galilee, came the word of the Lord, Go and warn the people of Nineveh. That this command seemed strange to a Hebrew, may well be inferred from Jonah's flight from the presence of the Lord; but far more strange it would have been, had there not been something in the history of his people tending to explain it; and such appears, if, as there is every reason to believe and none to doubt, the wonders of their story, which now reverberate through all the world, rolled in ancient times through all the East. This, in part, explains the sending of Jonah to the men of Nineveh, and the power of his warnings. Their fathers had told them of him who went forth out of Mesopotamia, and of the wondrous fortunes of his race; they had listened long for some voice to speak to them from those high places, where this mysterious people worshipped; and when, at last, a Hebrew, marshalled by no array of miracles, but mighty in the traditional glory of his lineage, preached to them repentance, Nineveh believed God.

The fact that Babylon was in that part of the world from whence their sacred traditions came to the Hebrews, together with that of the extreme antiquity of the city, becomes of some interest to us, when the Magi become acquainted with those "wise men" of Babylon, called Chaldeans, alike in sacred and in profane history.[1] Though it is only a little while before the Captivity that in the Scriptures Babylon is "the beauty of the Chaldee's excellency,"[2] it is also named as a City in the third generation after the Patriarch Noah;[3] and it was received as a fact among the Greeks, that for 1903 years before its conquest by Alexander the Great (B. C. 331), astronomical observations had been made and recorded in that city.[4] This seems to

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[1] Who the Chaldean people were, and whether they founded Babylon, or possessed it by conquest, are questions more or less in doubt; but it seems certain that they adopted the language of the Babylonian region, and that "the tongue of the Chaldeans" (Dan. i. 4), like the Latin language in the Middle Ages, at length became the exclusive possession of the learned class, from this fact called Chaldeans.

[2] Isa. xiii. 19.

[3] Gen. x. 10.

[4] It is at least remarkable that these two dates give the year B. C. 2234, which the Chaldean Berosus fixes upon as the commencement of the Chaldean Dynasty in Babylon. See Rawlinson, Herodotus, vol. i. Essay vi. Grote (History of Greece, part ii. ch. xix.), in a valuable note, says, "The earliest Chaldean astronomical observation known to the astronomer Ptolemy, both precise and of ascertained date to a degree sufficient for scientific use, was a lunar eclipse of the 19th of March, 721 B. C. . . . That the

prove, there must have ever been in that ancient city a learned class with an unbroken succession; and — whether the learned "Chaldeans" were coeval with the city or not — in ancient times the learned and the priestly class were the same, and as the Chaldeans preserved the scientific, so they must have preserved, also, the sacred traditions of Babylon and the region round about; and thus their sacred traditions must have, more or less, resembled those that came down through the Patriarchs to the Hebrews.

By the Greeks, the Chaldeans were sometimes spoken

Chaldeans had been, long before this period, in the habit of observing the heavens, there is no reason to doubt; and the exactness of those observations cited by Ptolemy implied (according to the judgment of Ideler) long previous practice. . . . There seem to have been Chaldean observations, both made and recorded, of much greater antiquity than 721 B. C., though we cannot lay much stress on the date of 1903 anterior to Alexander the Great, which is mentioned by Simplicius (ad Aristot. de Cœlo, p. 123) as being the earliest period of the Chaldean observations sent from Babylon by Callisthenes to Aristotle. Ideler thinks that the Chaldean observations, anterior to 721 B. C., were useless to astronomers from the want of some fixed era, or definite cycle, to identify the date of each of them. . . . It is to be noted that Ptolemy always cited the Chaldean observations as made by '*the Chaldeans*,' never naming any individual; though, in all the other observations to which he alludes, he is very scrupulous in particularizing the name of the observer. Doubtless he found the Chaldean observations registered in just this manner."

of as a kind of Magi,[1] from some general resemblance as diviners; and the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, in rendering the terms that in the Book of Daniel denote the classes of the Wise Men of Babylon, uses the term Magi.[2] There is nothing in the Hebrew that authorizes this, and it may have come from the difficulty of finding in the Greek, words answering to the five distinctions in the Hebrew text. No doubt this use of the word for persons living in the East, was one of the reasons why St. Matthew, when he used the title Magi, added to it "from the Far East."[3]

Still, in itself, it is probable that, long before the time of Cyrus, there were some of the true Magi in multitudinous Babylon. For Magian rites were known as far west as Jerusalem before the captivity;[4] and

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[1] So Hesychius. In the Greek version of Gen. xli. 8, by Symmachus, the word Magi is found where the LXX. read interpreters; and the English version reads, Pharaoh "called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof."

The evidence tending to prove the learned Chaldeans a species of Magi, is in resemblances that prove nothing, and in the fact that when "the king of Jerusalem and his men of war fled forth out of the city," and "all the princes of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate," with them came one, styled Rab-mag, a title in which the Persian word for priest is thought to appear, though this is very doubtful. Jer. xxxix. 3, 4.

[2] Dan. i. 20; ii. 2, 27; iv. 4.

[3] The Septuagint seems to have been in common use with the Palestinian Jews, as well as with those of other countries.

[4] See ch. iii. pp. 88, 89.

throughout Western Asia, even in times almost beyond the reach of history, there seems to have been a degree of intercourse and of mutual influence; social, political, and religious resemblances; and wars, conquests, and dynasties, whose memory has nearly or quite perished.[1]

The order of the Chaldeans continued under the Persians; for when Alexander made his entry into Babylon, part of its citizens, says Quintus Curtius, crowded together on the wall, eager to see the new monarch, and a still greater multitude went forth to meet him; of these were the Magi — *suo more patrium carmen canentes* — "according to their custom singing their ancient hymns;" after whom the Chaldeans, with their instruments of music, came. He describes these as priests of the Babylonians, and *savans*, who taught the times and motions of the stars.[2]

When Alexander entered Babylon, he doubtless felt as we all feel, that then he was monarch of the East — so much by far the greatest city of the Persian Empire was Babylon. Even under the Persians, the Chaldeans there could not have been much inferior to the Magi; and Cyrus and his successors, no doubt, gave the learned and religious order of the Imperial City[3] some-

[1] Chedorlaomer's expedition from beyond the Tigris to the Dead Sea, illustrates this, (Gen. xiv. 1–5); and the statement of Berosus, that the first Dynasty in Babylon, was Median.

[2] Historia Alexandri Magni, lib. v. 1. Chaldæi, Babyloniorumque non vates modo, sed etiam artifices . . . siderum motus et status temporum vices ostendere.

[3] It was the residence of the Persian court for part of the year.

thing of the consideration they gave the learned and religious order of their empire.[1]

The traditions of the Chaldeans were more like those of the Hebrews than were those of any people except the Persians — a fact not inconsistent with their gross idolatry. With a corrupt worship, much historical religious truth may long be preserved. In the ancient nations much of true religion survived, side by side with false religion; but the imposing ceremonial and enduring monuments of the corrupt, popular worship receive a larger place in history, than the less imposing truth, which they now overshadow historically, as once they did really, and in every way tend to efface from the human memory.

Whatever the relations of Magi and Chaldeans before the Persian conquest, after that epoch, in spite of the rivalry, jealousy, and contention there must have been between them, they more or less fraternized in Babylon; for in those days, the wise sought knowledge, not so much from books, as in the truer mode of intercourse with the wise; and the fragments of Chaldean philosophy show a likeness to that of the Magi caused by, or the cause of, much intercourse between them.

This is the more probable when we consider the effect on the Magi of the change relatively to the civilizations of the world, wrought for them by the wars that

[1] Under the Greeks the Chaldeans, like the Magi, lost caste; and in the Western world, their name also was at length assumed by those who made it a reproach.

began with Cyrus. The day of Persian glory, ushered in by his martial genius, was full of rousing events. If *now* the Persians were to come forth from their highlands, possess again the Plain of the Tigris and the Euphrates, seize Damascus, Beyroot, and Jerusalem; hold Alexandria, the Suez Canal and the valley of the Nile, it would electrify the world; yet it would not equal the exploits of Cyrus and Cambyses. The cities they stormed and took were greater, they overran countries more thickly peopled, the civilizations they beheld were more gorgeous, the shock of ideas greater. But for the fable of India, and for Athens, the Persian Empire embraced all there was of civilization. For one brilliant moment the Persian, like the Greek afterwards, and the Roman, at a still later day, was the central man of the world. It is not given us to call up with equal vividness his elder empire; yet the Persian, though as the elder his civilization was less varied, is not less worthy of study than the Greek or the Roman; and, in influence on the course of human events, is next to the Hebrew.

That early cycle of civilization, which included Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, was characterized by power. All its monuments are colossal. In Titanic strength the Persian was not equal to the Egyptian, or to the Chaldean; in intellect he was their superior. The Magian religion is a more wonderful fact than the wall of Babylon. It is a monument to the Magian intellect, lasting as the Pyramids; and we may be sure the men who wrought out this religion, felt the mental

excitement of the stirring period of the Persian Empire, may be sure, their quick, inquisitive, appreciating eyes marked the confluence of streams of truth in Babylon, the meeting there of agreeing lines of old-world traditions, and earnestly searched into their resemblances and differences.

The king of Babylon made a Hebrew, the President of the Chaldeans. The Chaldee passed, the Persian came. The Magi took the place of the Chaldeans, as the imperial order; the new monarch raised the same Hebrew to a rank above both; and these learned and religious orders were brought together, in the metropolis of the world, under the same illustrious foreigner. Then to the Magi, who brought with them the traditions of Bactria, far in the East, were brought the traditions of Judea, far in the West; and, at this epoch in its history, this order embodied the wisdom of the East — Bactrian, Median, Persian, Chaldean, Aramean, and Hebraic.

The thought we have given to the relations of the Magi with the Chaldeans, recalls how much of truth must have survived in Western Asia in the day of Cyrus; how events then liberalized the Magian mind, and opened it to quick and deep impressions; but these things have for us only a general interest. No doubt the Magi compared their own religion, even as their science and art, with that of the Babylonians; but their own reminiscences of the truth were more truthful, and their religion more pure; yet these researches may

have fitted some of them to mark and appreciate the fact that this was reversed, when they came to search into the faith of the race of Abraham.

In the historic cycles of the ancient world, wherever the centre of power is, there the Hebrew is sure to be, and sure to draw to himself the chief interest. So it is on the shores of the Nile, by the rivers of Babylon, and in the palace of the Great King in Shushan. With this people the true interest of history begins; and it seems ordained that it shall never afterwards be wholly separate from them. The predestined end of the culture of the Greeks, was reached when Hebrew Evangelists and Apostles made their language imperishable; and the most interesting ruin in Rome is the arch commemorating the ruin of Jerusalem, so closely connected with its own. Is Babylon, then, the centre and height of dominion? the Hebrew will be there. Is another world-power rising on its ruin? there he will be also.

The king of Assyria, who carried away the Ten Tribes as captives[1] into the East (B. C. 721), colonized some of them in towns of his subjects, the Medes. A little more than a century afterwards the king of Babylon led away captive the people of Judea.[2] "By the rivers of Babylon there they sat down, yea, they wept when they remembered Zion." In that same hour, beyond the eastern mountains that looked down

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[1] 2 Kings xvii. 6. [2] 2 Kings xxv. 8, 11.

on the scene of their exile, the Lord was preparing the humiliation of their oppressors, and their restoration to the Holy City by him, whom in a preceding generation he had foretold by name — "Cyrus, the Man from the Far East."

CHAPTER VI.

DANIEL AND THE MAGI.

Cyrus made a royal decree that the Temple of God in Jerusalem should be rebuilt. Few facts in history are more certain and less likely than this. For the country of the Jews was far off and small. Their numbers were inconsiderable. Their language was unintelligible to Cyrus. He knew them only as slaves of those he himself had enslaved.

Palestine, a high entrenched fort on the borders of the Great Western Sea, commanding the approaches to and from Egypt, was invaluable to the security of their Empire, if garrisoned by a people bound to the Persians by strong ties of gratitude; but this did not appear until wars and reverses later than the reign of Cyrus. His decree was for the rebuilding of the Temple only. It was not until the fourth reign afterwards that Persia suffered the Jews to inclose the strong site of Jerusalem with a wall. Until this was done neither the Temple, nor the small population that gathered round it, was safe from enemies round about, — from the Samaritan, and from the Ammonite, from the Philistine and from the Arab.[1]

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[1] Neh. iv. 7.

Not until they had once more a stronghold could the Jews, or their enemies, feel they were again a people. Hence the bitter wrath of their foes at the building of the Wall, and the haste of the work "when the builders, every one, had his sword girded by his side," and half of the men "labored in the work, and half of them held the spears, from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.[1]" In those days, there could no more be a city without walls than without people; and the time of the building of the wall was the date of the renewal of Jerusalem. Not, therefore, from the decree for the rebuilding of the Temple, but from the time of the decree for the rebuilding of the Wall, through which Jerusalem became once more a capital, and the Jews a nation, the "seven and three score and two weeks" of the Great Prophecy measured to "the Messiah, the Prince.[2]" In that prophecy it was revealed to Daniel that the Wall should be rebuilt, "even in troublous times," and it was rebuilt in times that were so, not only for the Jews, but for Persia as well. For the decree, that Jerusalem should be a City, seems to have grown out of the facts that the Persians had not only lost, as subjects, all the Greek sailors of the coast of Asia Minor and the adjacent islands, but had agreed not to come within three days' journey of the sea; and, therefore, strong reasons of state policy dictated their permission to fortify their almost impregnable, inland site of Jerusalem. Until these disasters, the state policy of Persia

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[1] Neh. iv. 18, 21. [2] Dan. ix. 25.

was rather regardless of the Jews, as a people of small account, if not distrustful of them. It was not until, in a measure, compelled by circumstances, that they were willing to trust them with power, and to assent to their having a Capital of their own — a trust of which the Jews proved themselves worthy. The two edicts — the one for the building of the Temple, the other for the building of the Wall of Jerusalem — are often confused together; but they were separated by the time of more than half a century; the latter grew out of political changes that were subsequent to the former, and was dictated by military considerations; while there seems to have been no military, and no political, reason of much weight, that could have moved to the other.

It may, perhaps, be surmised that the former decree may have been a boon, purchased from Cyrus with a bribe — to which Asiatic kings have usually been accessible; but, apart from the sublime terms of the decree itself, such an idea fits only the late degenerate stages of the Persian Empire, and does not accord with the hardihood and temperance of its uncorrupt youth, nor with aught known of its heroic founder.

His religion bore some resemblance to the Hebrew; but this alone would not have made a king, who worshipped Ormazd in the temple of the firmament, and whose altars were the "earth o'er gazing mountains" of Iran, build for Jehovah a house in far Judea, when such a purpose was likely to provoke the scorn, and to kindle against him the religious zeal of those Persians, who destroyed temples of the Greeks and the gods of Egypt.

For the remarkable decree of Cyrus, then, there must have been a cause as remarkable. From the terms of the decree itself it appears that this was a command of God, — undoubtedly that revealed, before Cyrus was born, to the Hebrew prophet, Isaiah. It was, then, divinely ordained and divinely foretold; but the supernatural, as revealed, is ever so harmoniously blended with the natural, in a course of events where the two are seen together, that the better the natural, in such a case, is understood, the more the supernatural is credible. Besides the fact of this revelation, the decree seems to require for its explanation the presence, at the Persian court, of some Hebrew, familiar with palaces and clothed in power. For, between this command, hidden in a foreign language and in the books of slaves, and its fulfilment by the King, there is a gulf, which even the imagination can hardly bridge over. That gulf is bridged over by the preternatural history of a man made for the time, by the fact that there was near that Persian monarch a Hebrew, accredited by miracles and strong in wisdom, honored alike by the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and by Darius the Mede, Daniel the prophet and the sage, that imperial man, himself the harmony of many diversities, whose strange, unique history, even to the Assyrian coloring and Babylonian grandeur of his visions, is so consistent with itself, and with the world-wide changes and wonders among which he lived.

It is not written in the Scriptures that Daniel had aught to do with the decree of Cyrus; but there is no

full history, either of the decree, or of Daniel. We know him well. After Moses, he is the grandest and the most life-like man in the Hebrew annals, — which is to say, in the annals of mankind; yet we have only his visions framed in a slight sketch of his life. As would be natural to an aged man, a chapter is given to his youth; and this is so masterly, so luminous a piece of self-portraiture, that it supplies all that is needed of his biography, and of the times and circumstances in which he lived, when it is supplemented by the few facts he afterwards relates of himself, and by the brief historical references interspersed among those visions and revelations, to preserve which, is the aim of this memoir. All that is written by him is written to the glory of God, and not of himself. It is for this he records his own safety in the den of lions; for he also records, so naturally, how the three companions of his boyhood were safe in the furnace of fire. All this unique memoir — if such it may be called — with the exception of its opening page, recites open interventions of God, with interpretations of them, or visions to him revealed; and it is not altogether within its scope to relate the part he may have had in obtaining the decree of Cyrus. Yet there may be an allusion to it; and, if there is so, though very slight, it is characteristic of the heart of the man. The first chapter, which seems to him sufficiently to introduce those events in his life that he feels he must put on record forever, ends with saying, — "this Daniel continued *till the first year* of Cyrus the Persian." This seems to me *like the pointing of his*

hand to some event in that year; for, one of the revelations to him is dated in that king's *third* year; and, again, at the close of the chapter describing his deliverance from the lions, it is added, "this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and of Cyrus the Persian." Now, *it was in that first year of his reign* that Cyrus sent forth his decree to rebuild the Temple.

Whether this be, or not, the meaning of his pointing thus to that ever memorable year, I cannot but think that one of the latest, one of the noblest and most characteristic of all his achievements, was his gaining from Cyrus this grand decree. For here the known of the history of Daniel points straight to the unknown. He seems born for this; and there was no Hebrew, who would have dared, or been suffered by his people, to take his place in this matter, or, to whom, in his stead, the King would have listened, as an interpreter of Hebrew prophecy. The presence, then, of Daniel with Cyrus, no doubt, is the missing link between the prophecy and its fulfilment; and thus the decree itself, without him almost incredible, is one of the facts in the history of the time, that confirms the history of the prophet.

Vainly the Genius of Painting tries to shadow forth the mystery of the last night of Babylon. When Belshazzar feasted high his thousand lords, and they drank their wine from the vessels of the Temple of God, and praised their images of gold and of stone, and the fingers of a man's hand came forth and wrote on the wall, how well it suits the spiritual meaning of the sign,

that none but a Hebrew can read the writing! How well the ordering of invisible powers is known, when the last word of Babylon does honor to a Hebrew! The history of the world is a drama performed in the presence of invisible spectators; and the actors do not understand what they are representing. Belshazzar, proclaiming the prophet third ruler in his realm, shows, in the last of its kings, the high spirit of the founders of his empire; yet in that hour the greatness of Daniel dwarfs the pillared glories of his capital, and overmatches all the gods and all the men of Babylon; while the whole scene is the everlasting symbol of the world's glory and the world's ruin.

But, in moral grandeur, it equals not that left untold, when, in the palace-temple of the Great King, in the presence of his officers of state, who, in number and rank, made his court seem to Persia a semblance of the court on high, and to God's representative on earth, Daniel interpreted the command of the Almighty, saying to the Conqueror, by name, "I the Lord, who will go before thee to open the gates of brass, to break in pieces the bars of iron, to subdue the nations before thee, I charge thee to rebuild my house in Jerusalem;" and when the Master of the World believed the word of the Lord, and, with the assent of the religious powers of his realm, sent forth that decree, on which, to human eyes, hung all the future the Prophet saw in vision.

The grand modesty of his silence seems to me rather to prove, than to disprove, that the chief actor in that surpassing hour was Daniel. But, whether so or not,

that decree is of deepest interest to our inquiries. As the Persian kings were Pontiffs, the proclamation of Cyrus, the Persian, "the Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He hath charged me to build for Him a house in Jerusalem;" and the previous proclamation of the Median, Darius, "unto all people, nations, and languages, I make a decree, that, in every dominion of my kingdom, men fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God," were authoritative recognitions of Jehovah, as the same with Ormazd, the God of the Persians; and, as Cyrus, no doubt, consulted the Chief Magi before he made his decree, at least this great historical fact inevitably follows, *that part of Hebrew Scripture was interpreted to them, and, by them, most solemnly acknowledged and acted upon as divine.*

Even if the reverence of the Magi for the command of Jehovah concerning his Temple in Jerusalem was not owing to Daniel, it would still be true that the imagination can hardly frame a course of events that would have given a stranger, greater influence with the Magi, than that recorded of him. In the East, royal favor makes dignitaries with a swiftness and completeness so impressive to Orientals, that they conceive it hath in it a divine quality, and listen, as to God, when commanded to bow down before the slave, or the stranger, whom kings delight to honor. Familiar with the sudden ruin of favorites, the honor of Daniel, continuing through changes of dynasties and a succession of rulers, must have greatly impressed the Magi, and, together with the

natural and supernatural wisdom to which it was due, must have given him a grand entrance into their religiously sensitive minds. His prevision of the kingdom of the Lord was so much in harmony with the great hope of their religion, of the triumph of the kingdom of Light, that it is in vain to look to any other ancient religion for a similar point of contact between it and the sublime visions of Hebrew Prophecy; and even more so, for such another, as the Persian expectation of a Redeemer to come, in the likeness of man.

But the explanations and confirmations of the Pilgrimage of the Wise Men are not thus exhausted, for from the Scriptures it seems to appear, how through the working together of Hebrew truths, and of their own ideas, the Magi connected the birth of a predicted Redeemer, and an appearing Star. The Evangelist records a part only of the facts, but in the Bible voice answers unto voice.

Daniel, one of the children, "understanding science, having ability to stand in the King's palace, and to whom might be taught the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans," was familiar with the religions of those nations among whom his lot was cast. His training makes this certain; and without this knowledge, he would not have been called to the offices he held. Such, too, the spirit of the man, and such the circumstances in which he was placed, that he must have felt intense interest in prophecies of the Messiah, not of a Hebrew origin; and must have made use of such to enkindle, among the Wise of the East, an expectation of the

Messiah. With what is known of his history, there is needed no further evidence that these things were so.

The oracle of Balaam was such a prophecy — and he must have made this use of it, not only for the general reason that it was not a Hebrew prophecy, but for the particular reason that Balaam was of Mesopotamia. This was a more interesting fact to Chaldeans than to Magians; but in their relations with Daniel, the learned in Babylon were one class; and the fame of Balaam was great enough to transcend national lines. If his fame did not, the remoteness of his age would; for he lived in a time, that, in the reign of Cyrus, was hoary antiquity. His voice then reached the Magi from the height of a thousand years. Of personages like Balaam, the tradition lives on; age repeats it to listening youth, by them to be repeated in their age, and even the far-off echo retains something of the power of the voice. In Chaldea, there may have been oracles of Balaam preserved in writing; but whether or not preserved in writing, or by tradition, Daniel could point to one oracle of his in the books of the Hebrews. There it was written, "Balaam, the son of Beor, . . . he hath said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh. There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."[1] The words,

[1] Numbers xxiv. 15, 16, 17.

"there shall come a Star out of Jacob," must have struck the imagination of astrologers, — and such the Magi were. With their notions, they could not but think this saying meant that, in some future age, a Star would usher in the dominion of some Great Personage in Judea. This was, naturally, inevitably their interpretation of the oracle. And the wonderful purpose of their own Pontiff king, moved to it by the command of God to restore the enslaved and exiled children of Israel to their own country, must have intensified their wonder at this very ancient prophecy of one not of the Hebrew race. This strange thing which they themselves had witnessed, and in which they themselves had borne a part, must have seemed to them in mysterious harmony with the word of the ancient seer, in presaging something marvellous in the future of Israel.

Data, from which the time of the Messiah might be computed, were revealed to Daniel. There is reason to think the Magi knew this, for Hebrew prophecy was no secret thing. The revelations of the prophets were published to their own countrymen, and the books that contained them were not hidden from strangers. It is evidence of this that, before the Christian era, the Jews translated them all into the Greek, then the common language of a great part of the world. If the revelation as to the time of the Messiah was in any way made known to the Magi of the reign of Cyrus, whether by Daniel himself or not, their high veneration for the prophet, and the religious interest of the oracle, could not but have fixed their attention earnestly

upon it. Even the fact that it was mystical in its language, and difficult of interpretation, appealed to the professional honor of men trained to look into the meaning of dark sayings, and versed in the harmonies of numbers; and they must have tried to search out its true import and determine the time. For the aspiration to pierce into the secrets of the future, then unchilled by disappointments and unsatiated, as now, by the fulness of knowledge revealed, was so eager and intense as to absorb into itself a large part of the activity of the human intellect, hardly less active then, than now. Now, a great earnestnesss to search into the secret things of the worlds in space, has taken the place of the old longing to search into the secret things of the worlds in time, and the present intensity of the one measures the ancient intensity of the other.

The date the Magi fixed upon as the end of the seven and three score and two weeks of the oracle may have closely approximated to the truth. This date, and the ancient prediction of a Star at the birth of the Great Personage whose time was thus foretold, — a prediction in harmony with their modes of thought as astrologers, and, in itself, simple and striking, — these were not likely to be forgotten in the unbroken succession of these conservators of traditions.

But in reflecting upon the probability of some relation between the revelation of the Lord to Daniel and the pilgrimage of Magi to Jerusalem, seeking for Him, three more or less difficult questions arise. The seven, and the three score and two weeks measure not to the

year of the Messiah's birth, but to the fulness of his life: — How then could the Magi have identified the Star of His Birth? The answer to this question involves the consideration of certain astronomical facts, and must be deferred to a subsequent chapter.

The second question is, How could revelations of Daniel to the Magi have been remembered five hundred years and more? This would be a great difficulty if they were entrusted to tradition. Even then their memory might have thus lasted, and could, at any time, have been reinvigorated from the sacred books of the Hebrews, who, from the time of Cyrus onwards, dwelt in considerable numbers in the capitals of the Persians, or of the Parthians. But some revelations to Daniel may have been preserved by the Magi in writing, as all of them were by the Jews through this very period. For the Magi had a literature; and this was growing for some centuries before the time of Daniel, and, onwards, to the time of the conquest of Alexander (B. C. 331); and, after thousands of years, some parts of this are still preserved by yet existing Magi, that is by the priests of the Parsees, who are lineal and spiritual successors of the Magi of the reign of Cyrus, inheriting their blood, observing the same religious rites, revering the same books, and honoring Zoroaster.

About the year B. C. 464, Themistocles, flying from Greece, found, for a time, honor with the Great King. Had the royal archives of Media and Persia survived, no doubt there would be found in them some note of this, and some memoranda as to the policy he advised

towards the Greeks. At the earnest persuasion of the king himself, the honor of an initiation into the Order of the Magi was conferred on this illustrious foreigner. Had this unspiritual man been a diviner and seer, might not oracles of his have been remembered by the Magi? and were their entire literature now extant, might they not reasonably be looked for there? Save that he lived a century earlier, this would be more probable in the case of Daniel. His supernatural wisdom, his official position as chief of the wise men of Babylon, his eminence above all the learned orders of the Persian Empire, make it almost certain that there was some record of him in the books of the Magi.

In the period from the conquest of Alexander, to the reëstablishment of the Persian Kingdom (A.D. 226), much the largest part of this Magian literature perished; but what part of it was in existence at the Christian era, or what that part contained, is unknown; and it is quite possible that, in it, there may then have been that revelation to Daniel, which was then, as it is now, and ever will be, of world-wide interest.

The third question is this: As the Persians believed that Sosiosh, whose coming was to bring about the renovation of all things, would be born of the family of Zoroaster, could they have received, as true, a revelation that this high honor would be given to a land and race that was once subject to them, and which, in the various ways known to national egotism and pride, they thought inferior to their own? As the difficulty here need not be extended to the whole of the Magi, as it

reaches only to those who went to Jerusalem, it might suffice to say, that, in the minds of a few, this might be accounted for by the authority of the prophet Daniel, and by the fact that, in other nations, a few grand souls have risen above the prejudices of their race and time; but some direct light may be thrown upon this difficulty. If the Magian pilgrims to Jerusalem sought for the Sosiosh, who, according to the Persian belief, was to put an end to death, to raise the dead, and to make all things new, then it must be supposed that a very great victory was gained by them over their national feelings. This would not be incredible to those who believe that God is able to guide to all truth, and to exalt to all nobility; but in showing the possibility of a Hebrew historical statement regarded strictly as such, the line of thought must be limited to purely historical considerations.

The Magian belief in the Sosiosh, in its earliest form, seems to have known of one, but in a later form, it held that three Prophets were to arise, of whom the Greatest would be the Last. Now, in the revelation to Daniel, the coming foretold seems not to be of that absolutely final effect, attributed, by the Persians, to the last of the mighty Three. It is not so incredible, then, as irrespective of this it might be, that certain of the Magi believed that one of these might be born in the Hebrew land, and of the Hebrew race; or, their belief may have been wholly distinct from their own Median traditions, save as they prepared them to accredit the oracle of the prophet, as being in harmony with

their main features. And here the fact should be recalled, that the religion of the Hebrews and of the Magi were not alien religions; that their Pontiff kings had solemnly acknowledged that the God of the Hebrews was the same God of heaven whom the Persians worshipped; and that the Temple in Jerusalem was, in some true sense, a Persian Temple, as its rebuilding was ordered by edicts of Persian kings. In all the earth, the Persians and the Hebrews stood alone in their adherence to the primeval revelation of the unity of God, and out of this, in part, there had grown, for a time, close relations between them. Beside this, the Persian was, by nature, generously appreciative. His zeal for the faith made him intolerant of the idolatry of other nations, but he was not narrow-minded as the Jews — quite erroneously — are often said to have been. Thus, a variety of considerations tend to make it credible that, the minds of some of the Magi might have been open to accredit the fact revealed to Daniel, that a great Deliverer would be born of a race, which, though alien from their own in blood, was kindred in worship.

Even had Daniel not lived, the Magian pilgrimage to Jerusalem might be explained by the public, and long-cherished Jewish expectation of a Messiah, a knowledge of which was widely spread abroad. Such an expectation made known to some of the Magi of the Far East, and received by them as accounting for a new phenomenon in the heavens, might, with a few Asiatics who were enthusiasts, astrologers, and members of an order whose characteristic it was ever to be watch-

ing for the signs and wonders of the intervention of Ormazd in the affairs of men, might, in that age have led to such a pilgrimage. But the Magian pilgrimage is not so bare as this of known antecedent facts that give to it credibility. It is hardly possible to take what is recorded of Daniel and place it side by side with the Magian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and not to believe they are related as cause and effect. The explanation of that pilgrimage, thus suggested, — so far as it goes, — is so natural and so perfect, that only the fanaticism of unbelief will refuse to admit its probability; and to establish it, requires only a very little direct evidence.

I find this in the inquiry which the Magi made in Jerusalem. The form of this is remarkable. They inquire for the King of the Jews. This sounds both strange and dangerous. It was strange, for Herod had been king for more than thirty years, and all his children were grown up; and all Jerusalem felt it was dangerous, as the Jews had perverted their belief in a Messiah from a spiritual to a political Redeemer. But certainly they were not understood to inquire for a temporal prince by Herod, who, meaning to delude them, promised when they found Him they sought, he himself would worship Him; and, no doubt, the Magi were understood by all to inquire for a spiritual Lord. No doubt they explained that this was their meaning; for the words ascribed to them are only a part of what they said, though preserving the main features in their inquiry, and its very remarkable form.

From whence could have come the very peculiar form of their inquiry? The words used in the revelation to Daniel explain what is else inexplicable. That revelation foretold — "a Messiah, a Prince" — as the words are rendered in the English version. The first word — transferred, unchanged from the Hebrew into the English — means "the anointed." The second means a leader, a ruler, and, as leadership and rule pertain to those of royal blood, its meaning tends towards the idea of a King. Even if the word be taken in the sense of a leader merely, it is associated with the word anointed, and anointing was part of the ceremony in coronation, and was not even for princes, but for kings, only. On putting the terms together — an anointed chief — then, the idea of a King comes out unmistakable and clear. Translations of the Bible into other tongues keep near as may be to the literal sense, but in a free translation, seeking only to express the thought, the natural rendering here would be, a King; and it is most likely a Hebrew would have used this term in translating these words to a foreigner, though from motives of prudence, the Jews under Herod preferred to use among themselves the term Messiah, in which the idea of kingship was less dangerously prominent; and certainly the word King would be the one that would most naturally occur to foreigners, as the best interpretation of the fulness of the thought of the prophet. It is clear, then, why the Magi made their inquiry in the form they did, "Where is he that is born the King of the Jews." They thought the term King, as used

by them, would be understood in a spiritual sense; they thought there was a peculiar propriety in the form of their inquiry, because it showed the motive to their pilgrimage was a prophecy of Daniel, who, *though a Hebrew, was a Magian*, held in honor by their renowned sovereigns of old, and whose bones were in the land of the Medes. This was what the form of their inquiry meant. This the Evangelist meant to indicate by preserving that form. And this would ever have been clear to the readers of the English version had it rendered the words in the prophecy of Daniel, as the ancient Syriac version did render them, "the anointed one, THE KING."

As the fact of the continuing presence of Hebrews in the land of the Medes and Persians is more or less important in the explanation of the Magian pilgrimage, I repeat that, from the time of Cyrus to the conquest of Alexander, Judea was a part of the Persian Empire; that, in the Persian, and subsequently in the Parthian capitals, there were multitudes of Jews; and that the Star was first seen by the Magi in Babylonia, one of the great settlements of the Jews of the Dispersion. A little later than the Christian era, it was the seat of one of the schools of Jewish learning, and in the "days of Herod the King," Hillel, whom for his wisdom and piety, the Rabbins venerate next to Ezra, came up from thence to Jerusalem. From its learning, that country had strong attractions for the Magi, to whom all religious learning was attractive. When they saw the Star, they were sojourning, or

perhaps dwelling in that country. Either would be natural enough, for it was adjacent to Persia. Like Persia it was then under the Parthian rule. There was Ctesiphon one of the Parthian capitals; and, from their reception by King Herod, it is plain they were no strangers to the palaces of kings.

This fact that the Star was seen by them, not in Persia, but in Babylonia, not in the Far East but in the East, may go some ways towards explaining their Pilgrimage, as shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

HOPE OF THE MESSIAH IN SYRIA AND THE EAST.

When the Magi from distant Bactria, or Parthia, or Persia Proper, or any other district of the Far East, came into the East, they had accomplished one geographical stage of their long journey to Jerusalem, though they knew it not; and they had accomplished one historical stage of it also, for they had come fully within the circle of a wide-spread expectation, at that very time, of the Birth of some great personage in Judea.

This expectation is witnessed to by one Hebrew and by two Latin writers, — all in whose writings we should expect to find it, — though their testimony is by no means all the evidence of the fact. Josephus, writing of the Fall of Jerusalem, says, "What chiefly incited the Jews to the war, was an ambiguous prophecy, found in their sacred writings, that about that time, one from their country should obtain the Empire of the World. . . . This oracle in reality denoted the elevation of Vespasian, he having been proclaimed Emperor in Judea."[1] Tacitus, having chronicled the signs and wonders foretokening the fall of the city, says, "Quæ

[1] Bel. Jud. vi. 5, 4.

pauci in metum trahebant; pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore ut valesceret Oriens profectique Judæa rerum potirentur; quæ ambages Vespasianum ac Titum prædixerat. Sed vulgus, more humanæ cupidinis, sibi tantam fatorum magnitudinem interpretati, ne adversis quidem ad verum mutabantur:"[1] — Because of these the few feared, but the many believed that it was written in the ancient books of the priests, that at that very time the Orient — i.e. Syria — should prevail; and that those going forth out of Judea should obtain the Empire of the World. These ambiguous oracles predicted Vespasian and Titus. But the people, as is the way with men led by their wishes, interpreted in their own behalf this destined greatness, and were not converted to the truth even by calamities.

Suetonius says, "Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur. Id de Imperatore Romano, quantum eventu postea paruit, predictum Judæi ad se trahentes rebellarunt:"[2] — An ancient and abiding belief greatly prevailed throughout all the Orient, that fate had decreed, that at that very time those going forth out of Judea should obtain the empire of the world. This prediction of the Roman Emperor, as afterwards appeared by the event, the Jews, taking to themselves, rebelled.

The concurrence of an ancient, wide-spread presentiment springing out of the oracles of the Jews, with the

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[1] Tac., Hist., v. 13. [2] Suet., Vita Vespas., iv.

appearing of one who answered to it, yet in a way beyond all the imaginings of men, is a fact equally hard for infidels to explain or to deny. In this dilemma, they try to weaken the evidence for a fact whose importance they cannot hide, and claim that the testimony of the two Romans must be ruled out because they copied Josephus. Some Christian critics, conceding this claim, countenance the assumption concealed in it, that the fact rests on the word of Josephus only. This assumption is an error, and the evidence of this expectation is so vital to our argument, and in many ways is so important, that it should here be stated.

Without the testimony of any historian, the prophecies, beginning with Genesis, and especially those in the book of Daniel, are such that there must have been in Palestine, early in the first century, a lively hope of the appearing of some great personage. That such an expectation did, then and there, prevail, if not stated expressly in the Gospels, is inwrought with the whole course of the events they describe. The wars of the Jews with the Romans at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, and under Hadrian, accord in general features and in particular facts with such an expectation. And there is the testimony of Josephus. Such is the general evidence of this expectation apart from the two Roman writers. Josephus wrote his history, in part, to screen his unhappy countrymen from the jealousy of the Romans; and, Hebrew at heart, though an apostate, he would not have named it at all, had it not been too well known for him to pass it over. The fact was of such a

kind that it must have been well known to the Romans. The prophecies of the Jews had long been accessible to them in a Greek translation, and were, probably, better known to Roman statesmen and soldiers than to Roman scholars. For Palestine had long been held by Roman garrisons; and the sagacious officers of Rome, with whom the art of governing subject races was almost instinctive, and who were trained in the school of experience to know the power of religious ideas and predictions in war, would have been quick to mark such a belief, and to foresee all that might, and that did, result from it. The bloody siege of Jerusalem, connected as it was with the assumption of the purple by the Flavian dynasty, fastened on itself the steady gaze of Rome. The fall of Jerusalem was to the Romans a signal, perchance even a solemn event; and all the peculiar elements of its destiny must have been carefully noted by those watchful observers of political events.

There is, then, no antecedent likelihood in the notion, that both Tacitus and Suetonius knew of the expectation of the Jews only from Josephus. They had other authority than his for the Jewish war; and this fact was as likely as any, and more likely than most, to have come to them from other sources. They had read Josephus, no doubt; it is quite certain that Tacitus had; and yet it is clear that their statements are independent of his. They enlarge both the prophecy and the expectation. Tacitus says the oracle was that Syria should wax mighty; Suetonius makes all Syria expectant; while Josephus limits everything to Judea, both pro-

phecy and expectation. All three describe it as common, but the Latins in a wider field; and their terms, describing how generally it was talked about, are stronger than the Jew cared to use.

As to the breadth of this expectation, the Latin writers give the true impression. The Orientals are quick to receive such impressions to a degree a European, in this age, can hardly comprehend. It could not have been the expectation of the Jews in Palestine, and not of the Jews in all Syria. Through Syrian Jews it must have pervaded the whole Syrian mind; and the Syrian Jews being in constant intercourse with their kinsmen "beyond the Euphrates," it must have pervaded the Hebrew mind in that region also.

Some writers, hesitating between their dislike to admit the fact and a sense of what is due to their critical honor, admit the Latin testimony; but try to weaken its force, by saying that such an expectation, at the time of the Fall of Jerusalem, does not prove its existence at the Nativity, seventy years before. The gospels prove its existence then; but, limiting the argument to the Latin evidence, it is enough to say, that a belief, spread throughout all Syria, presupposes a growth and development; and the words of Suetonius are, "in Syria it was an ancient, abiding belief."

It was the expectation of the few, before it was of the many. It was known to the more spiritual in Israel — the wisest and quickest to discern the truth revealed as to the time of the Lord's appearing, as well as its mysterious spiritual import; and then in grosser forms

it became, at length, the common expectation of the Jews.

Every stage of this belief was reflected in the great Jewish settlement "beyond the Euphrates." When the priests determined in Jerusalem the instant of the new moon, whose rising fixed the time of the sacred feasts, beacons blazed from height to height along the Syrian highlands, north and eastward, until they gave the signal to the expectant millions of the Dispersion beyond the Great River; and, with almost equal celerity, every thought and feeling of the Holy City was transmitted to the Hebrews beyond the Euphrates.

At the time of the Incarnation of our Lord, an elect few in Jerusalem were awaiting his coming; and there must have been a like expectation among some of their spiritual brethren beyond the Euphrates. When the Magi came from the Far East into the East, they came fully within the circle of this expectance, whether then as general as afterwards or not. Being men of spiritual desires, and guided by divine grace, the thought is irresistible, that their ancient belief there received new life; that, in the very land of the Seer, they heard from Hebrews, as their fathers from a Hebrew, of the Star — by them faithfully remembered — of the King of the Jews; and not, as their fathers heard, of a Star which was to gild the heavens of a future age, but as then about to shine. If, at such at a time, these astronomers beheld what science tells us has sometimes been, the outshining of a new Star, we have, at once, the immediate moving cause of their Pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VIII.

KEPLER'S DISCOVERY.

CHRISTIANITY is often said to be a system of truths; but even its most mysterious truths are facts. Christianity, then, is a system of facts; and the evidence for it, the evidence that proves facts. The weight of such evidence, unlike that which proves mathematical problems, varies in different minds, and it varies in different ages. Questions, touching the validity of this evidence, unthought of by one generation, perplex another; and, while inquiry is thus constantly stimulated in this ever-varying field, God ever grants fresh confirmations of the reality of Christianity to meet the varying phases of the human mind.

Kepler, the most illustrious of astronomers, observed a new star, in the constellation Serpentarius, on the night of the 17th of October, in the year of our Lord 1604. His master, Tycho Brahe, had observed a similar wonder in the constellation Cassiopeia, on the night of the 11th of October, in the year 1572. These were not luminous bodies within our atmosphere; were not within, or near, the solar system; they were in the region of the fixed stars. Each grew more and more brilliant, till it shone like a planet. Then its lustre waned until

it ceased to be visible, — the one in March, 1574, the other in February, 1606. Their light was white, then yellow, then red, then dull, and so went out.

The star of 1572 appeared in a solitary quarter of the heavens; the star of 1604 took its stand near the path of the sun, as if, said Kepler, it would receive the salutations of all the planets.[1] It shone out in a wonderful astrological year.[2] In the December before, all astronomers had been greatly excited by a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, that is, their drawing so near together as to form a rare fact in Astronomy, a notable sign in Astrology, — then not wholly fallen into disrepute. In March, 1604, there was a still greater astrological wonder. These two planets were again in conjunction, together with the planet Mars. To the astronomers of that time, in whose thoughts there was

[1] Illa enim extra limites Zodiaci fulsit, in sidere Cassiopeiæ, loco cœli infrequenti, nec ullis planetarum accessionibus nobilitato; hæc stationem sibi elegit proxime viam regiam solis, lunæ, ceterorumque planetarum; sic ut ab omnibus planetis saluteretur. That star (of 1572) shone without the bounds of the Zodiac, in the constellation Cassiopeia, an unfrequented place in the heavens, not ennobled by the approach of any of the planets; this star (of 1604) chose for itself a place near the royal way of the sun, the moon, and the planets; as if it would receive the salutations of the planets. — Kepler, De Stella Nova.

[2] The year, says Sir David Brewster, "of the fiery trigon, or that in which Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars are in the *fiery* signs, Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, an event which occurs only every eight hundred years. — Life of Kepler, ch. i. This is especially noted by Kepler.

much of astrological speculation, these repeated and accumulative portents seemed a forewarning that something wonderful was about to come to pass in the celestial or terrestrial spaces. This seemed to them fulfilled, when, in the autumn of that year, in the very quarter of the heavens where two of these planets were still together, this strange star, as Kepler said, — vero vulgo expectata a longo tempore cum multa solemnitate et triumphali pompa ad diem constitutum est ingressa; more præpotentis alicujus monarchiæ, qui metropolim regni invisurus, præmissis longe antea metatoribus, loca comitatui designat, — far, and wide, and long expected, with much of preparation, and in triumphal pomp, came on the day ordained, like some all-powerful monarch, who, being about to look upon the metropolis of his realm, through officers sent long before, designates to his court their places.

The analogical genius of Kepler, ever watching for celestial resemblances, through whose intimations he might divine the laws established in the heavens, was especially excited by the coincidence between the going before of these planetary signs, and the apparition of the star; and he conceived that the Star, seen by the Magi, might have been foretokened and marshalled in by the same train of phenomena he had observed in these

[1] In eum præcise cœli locum, ad quem omnium astrologorum oculi congressum Jovis et Martis expectantes dirigebantur. Just in that part of the sky to which the eyes of all astrologers were turned, watching the conjunction of Jupiter and Mars. — Kepler, De Stella Nova.

three planets. He, therefore, traced their orbits backwards for sixteen hundred years, and made the remarkable discovery, that the planets Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in the Year of Rome 747, and, again, together with Mars, in 748. The Time of our Lord's Birth can hardly have been earlier. Its true date may be one, and probably is the last, of these years.[1]

Kepler thought his discovery determined the Year of our Lord. It comes not within my plan to consider this opinion; and, lest the mention of this strangely interesting discovery should awaken expectation but to disappoint it, I will here say, that I shall not use it as direct or positive evidence of a new Star at the Nativity; but shall, by and by, try to show that it makes the pilgrimage of the Magi more intelligible.

For two hundred years, this discovery, made by the Prince of Astronomers, was little heeded. In this century, it has been more thought of;[2] but there seems, as yet, to be no general acquiescence in any opinion as to its bearing on the first verse of the second chapter of St. Matthew.

One theory, however, has grown out of it that should here be considered. This theory looks solely to the

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[1] The Christian Era is coincident with 754; but from an eclipse in the Year of Herod's death, it is known that he died early in 750.

[2] In 1827, attention to it was reawakened by Bishop Munter of Copenhagen. It was discussed by the astronomer Schubert, of St. Petersburg, and by Dr. Ideler, of Berlin.

celestial phenomena of the year of Rome 747. Alford's admirably clear presentment of it is in these words: "In the year of Rome 747, on the 29th of May, there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, in the twentieth degree of the constellation Pisces, close to the first point of Aries, which was the part of the heavens noted, in astrological science, as that in which the signs denoted the greatest and noblest events. On the 29th of September, in the same year, another conjunction of the same planets took place, in the sixteenth degree of Pisces; and, on the 5th of December, a third, in the fifteenth degree of the same sign. On these two last occasions, the two planets were so near, that an ordinary eye would regard them as one star of surpassing brightness.[1] Supposing the Magi to have seen the first of these conjunctions, they saw it actually 'in the East;' for, on the 29th of May, it would rise three and a half hours before sunrise. If they then took their journey, and arrived at Jerusalem in a little more than five months (the journey from Babylon took Ezra four months; see Ezra vii. 9); if they performed the route from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in the evening, as is implied, — the December conjunction, in the fifteenth degree of Pisces, would be before them in the direction of Bethlehem. . . . Abarbanel, the Jew, who knew

[1] This sentence, from the first edition of Alford's Commentary on the New Testament, is omitted in its subsequent editions. I retain it, that the recent inquiries on this subject may be more fully appreciated, as will appear as we proceed.

nothing of this conjunction, relates it as a tradition, that no conjunction could be of mightier import than that of Jupiter and Saturn, which planets were in conjunction, A. M. 2365, before the birth of Moses, in the sign of Pisces; and thence remarks, that that sign was the most significant one for the Jews. From this consideration he concludes, that the conjunction of these planets, in that sign, in his own time (A. D. 1463), betokened the near approach of the Messiah. And, as the Jews did not invent Astrology, but learnt it from the Chaldeans, this idea, that a conjunction in Pisces betokened some great event in Judea, must have prevailed among the Chaldean astrologers."

Alford thinks, that, the word Star being taken in what he calls "its wider astrological meaning," "these circumstances form a remarkable coincidence with the history" in St. Matthew; and that "the very slight apparent inconsistencies with the above explanation are no more than the report of the Magi themselves, and the general belief of the age, would render unavoidable."

A friend,[1] who read this book in manuscript, suggested, "that the Magi, taking the time-data furnished by the prophet Daniel, ascertained the year of the Nativity, and, erecting a horoscope, predetermined the positions of the planets in the fated year; that the planetary sign, thus foreknown to the Wise Men of the East, received among them the name of the Star of the King of the Jews; that this prediction, at once religious

[1] The late Rev. J. McCarty, Rector of Christ's Church, Cincinnati.

and scientific, and so of peculiar interest to them, was treasured up among the wisdom kept from common eyes, and, where it was verified by the result, the pilgrimage is explained." Long previous to the time of Cyrus, the Chaldeans had calculated eclipses;[1] but whether there could have been, with any of the Magi, the science requisite to form such a calculation as this, is very doubtful. Still, there *may* have been, in the unknown of the history of the Magi, the fact supposed; and this brilliant suggestion has, at least, this value: it shows that the pilgrimage of the Magi might at once be explained, were our general knowledge of all that is related to it more perfect. It makes the theory advocated by Alford more complete; but, against each, there are these decisive objections.

In the second chapter of St. Matthew, the word Star cannot mean a conjunction of planets. Had the Magi, alone, used the word, it is conceivable that it might have this meaning. It was so easy for them to have used some more fitting word or phrase, and the jargon of Astrology so clove to adepts in the art, and was so common, that this is not likely; still, it is possible, and, in the Magi, it was admissible. But the Evangelist makes the word his own; and such a use of it, though proper for them, was not so for him.

For the language of Scripture, on natural subjects, has absolute truth. The common idea, that it is less accurate than scientific language, comes from not distin-

[1] See note on p. 111.

guishing between two kinds of language. The language of the Scriptures on natural subjects is the language of the human family. Its aim is to describe natural phenomena, as they appear. The aim of scientific language is to express facts lying back of the appearance, and to approximate, more and more, to the ultimate cause. Tested by their aims, the common language is perfect, the scientific imperfect. The one is perfect at once, the other never. The one is ever the same, the other is ever changing. Scripture reveals scientific truths, but never uses scientific language; if so, it would commit itself to variable ideas. While stating truths in nature, to which, of itself, science could never attain, it still adheres to that common language, that is the same for all, and changes not.[1] It thus pictures the genesis of the earth and all that it inhabit. Science may translate what it thus reveals into scientific language, but Scripture describes the events in the beginning, as they would have appeared to the senses. Hence, Scripture would not set forth a scientific conception in words accommodated to the popular mind. This would be neither scientific, or scriptural, language. The Magi might have done this, not the Evangelist.

Those who hold that the Star of the Magi was a conjunction of the planets, have to do away with the miracle of its guiding. This it is not possible to do. The words are, "Lo, the Star went before them, till it came and stood over where the Young Child was." The wording

[1] See "The Six Days of Creation," by Dr. Taylor Lewis, ch. iii., on Phenomenal Language.

of a legal document is not more precise; nor can any one, by taking time and pains, frame any form of words, that would better express the Star's guiding.

The bold, ingenious theory, that what the Magi saw was but a conjunction of certain planets, being, then, contrary to Scripture, might here be dismissed; yet, the whole history of Kepler's discovery, and of the discussions that have arisen out of it, is so interesting a chapter, both of scientific and religious inquiry, that I give the results arrived at, in a recent investigation, by Rev. Charles Pritchard, Hon. Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society,[1] made with the intent of testing the theory just considered. This confirms the fact, that there were three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in the year of Rome 747. "Similar results also have been obtained by Encke, and the December conjunction has been verified by the Astronomer Royal.[2] No celestial phenomena, therefore, of ancient date, are so certainly ascertained, as the conjunctions in question." But "the planets, instead of seeming like one star, were, at no time, nearer than the very considerable distance of double the moon's apparent diameter."[3] He pictures,

[1] Smith's Dict. of the Bible, Art., Star of the Wise Men.

[2] He also refers to Dr. Ideler's calculation, as "worked out with great care and no very great inaccuracy." This gave the same year and the following days: May 20, October 27, November 12. His are May 29, September 27, December 5. In his later editions, Alford gives both, but seems to accredit the latter.

[3] As mentioned before, in his first edition, Alford, misled, apparently, by some exaggeration or error of Dr. Ideler's,

clearly, the celestial phenomena of that year, — "a date assuredly not very distant from the time of our Saviour's birth;" and then tries to determine "how far they fulfil, or fail to fulfil, the conditions required by the narrative in St. Matthew."

After the conjunction in the month of May, the planets separated slowly "until the end of July, when, their motions becoming retrograde, they again came into conjunction, by the end of September. At that time, there can be no doubt that Jupiter would present to astronomers a magnificent spectacle. It was then at its most brilliant apparition, for it was at its nearest approach both to the sun and to the earth. Not far from it would be seen its duller and much less conspicuous companion, Saturn. This glorious spectacle continued almost unaltered for several days, when the planets again slowly separated, then came to a halt; when, by reassuming a direct motion, Jupiter again approached to a conjunction, for the third time, with Saturn, just as the Magi may be supposed to have entered the Holy City. And, to complete the fascination of the tale, about an hour and a half after sunset, the two planets might be seen from Jerusalem, hanging, as it were, in the meridian, and suspended over Bethlehem in the distance. These celestial phenomena, thus described,

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stated, that the planets seemed one star. This he has corrected; but, adhering to his theory, says, "The conjunction of the two planets, complete or incomplete, would be that which would bear astrological significance; not their looking like one star."

are, it will be seen, beyond the reach of question; and, at the first impression, they assuredly appear to fulfil the conditions of the Star of the Magi.

But, even supposing the Magi did undertake the journey, at the time in question, it seems improbable that the conjunction of December can, on any reasonable grounds, be considered as fulfilling the conditions in Matthew ii. 9. The circumstances are as follows: On December 4, the sun set at Jerusalem at 5 P. M. Supposing the Magi to have then commenced their journey to Jerusalem, they would first see Jupiter, and his dull, and somewhat distant, companion, one and a half hour distant from the meridian, in a south-east direction, and decidedly to the east of Bethlehem. By the time they came to Rachael's tomb (see Robinson's Biblical Researches, xi. 568), the planets would be due south of them, on the meridian, and no longer over the hill of Bethlehem (see the maps of Vandervelde and of Tobler); for that village (see Robinson, as above) bears from Rachael's tomb, South 5° East + 8° declension = South, 13° East. The road then takes a turn to the East, and ascends the hill near to its western extremity; the planets, would, therefore, be now on their right hand, and a little *behind* them: "the Star," therefore, ceased altogether to go "before them," as a guide. Arrived on the hill, and in the village, it became physically impossible for the Star to stand over any house whatever close to them, seeing that it was now visible far away beyond the hill, to the West, and far off in the heavens, at an altitude of 57°. As they advanced, the

Star would, of necessity, recede; and under no circumstances could it be said to stand "over" any house, unless at the distance of miles from the place where they were. . . A star, if vertical, would appear to stand over any house or object to which a spectator might chance to be near; but a star at an altitude of 57°, could appear to stand over no house or object in the immediate neighborhood of the observer. It is scarcely necessary to add, that, if the Magi had left the Jaffa gate before sunset, they would not have seen the planets at the outset; and if they had left Jerusalem later, "the Star" would have been a more useless guide than before. Thus, the beautiful phantasm of Kepler and Ideler, which has fascinated so many writers, vanishes before the more perfect daylight of investigation.

Grateful for this minute and difficult investigation, I almost distrust its accuracy, from the carelessness of its allusion to Kepler. The phantasy, that the Star of the Magi was a conjunction of planets, may "vanish before the more perfect daylight of investigation," but it never deluded him. The celestial foretokenings — as they seemed to Kepler — in the year 747, he thought of, as continuing into the year 748, and as reaching the culmination of their promise only when the three planets met together. To him, that golden circle of auspicious fire was but the herald of the New Star — even as John was but the herald of Christ. It was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

Since the New Star was the immediate cause that moved the Magi to undertake their Pilgrimage, the con-

junctions of the planets, in 747 and 748, may seem to be so disjoined from it, as in no way to aid in explaining it. Not so, however. As history before, so science now, enables us to answer difficult questions that have been pressed against the narrative. Strauss demands, How could the Magi, from a Star, have known the birth of the King of the Jews? — a thing, he would, perchance, have said credible, only in credulous ages, with deluded votaries of exploded art. Once, it would have sufficed to have said, The Lord may have told them. It would now and ever suffice, were it not that there is no intimation of this in their inspired history; and had it been the fact, the Magi would have been quick to declare, the Evangelist to record it. It is, therefore, to be supposed they were led to their conclusion, as men are usually guided to truth, not, indeed, without divine grace, yet, in the course of events. The grace of God is not thus lessened, and the faith of man is exalted.

A course of preceding events, such as might have led the Wise Men to Jerusalem, may be pointed out, by connecting together circumstances that are, all of them, either credible or certain. They had faith in ancient traditions. This is the inner key to the secret of their Pilgrimage; which is explained on the supposition that their own traditions, the belief, at that time, of the near appearing of some Great Person in Judea, their astrological notions, and the planetary signs, were the antecedent, related causes of that faith in the significance of the New Star which did send them to Jerusalem.

The expectant wonder of Kepler, and of all the as-

trologers of his time, as they watched the planetary signs at the close of the year 1603, and in the following spring, well illustrates the feelings with which we may suppose those ancient astrologers, on the night of the 29th of May, in the year of Rome 747, to have witnessed, in the cloudless sky of the East, the greeting of the planets Jupiter and Saturn. With mingling feelings of human curiosity and religious wonder, these devout astrologers gaze on this planetary omen, believed by them to be a sign for Judea. The thought, that this portent might foretell that the birth of its long-expected King was, at least, nigh, takes quick possession of their souls, as they inquire within themselves, What can, what does this mean? What great thing has come, or is about to come, to pass in the land of Judea? In the month of September, this marvel renewed, kindles their hearts to yet greater earnestness of inquiring hope. And, when, in December, the mystic sign, for the third time, is repeated, and when, in the following spring, these celestial foretokenings reach the fulness of the perfect number of four, and yet another planet joins in this greeting and language of the spheres, their faith rises near to the height of certainty; and when, at last, the New Star appears, these unsleeping watchers of the prophesying heavens instantly connect all these continuous signs and wonders in the firmament, and feel, with an assurance to which an audible voice from the skies would have added not, that the Star, so gloriously marshalled by attesting planets to its place on high, is, indeed, the long-predicted Star of the King of the Jews,

and that He is born. The apparition of His Star is to them what St. Augustine calls it — *lingua cœli* — a word from heaven.

An explanation, then, of their Pilgrimage is given; an explanation that consists of facts. Thus, it is a fact that there was an oracle that, in ancient times, was understood to foretell that the Birth of One, afterwards known as the Messiah, would be announced by a star: it is a fact that this oracle was known to Daniel; that the Time of the Messiah was revealed to him; that he had great authority with the Magi; that his prevision of the Messiah was in harmony with their belief, that prophets would be sent on earth by Ormazd. It is a fact, that, at the time of their Pilgrimage, there was a wide-spread expectation that this oracle and this prophecy were about to be fulfiled; it is a fact, that, about that time, there were signs in the planets, astrologically in harmony with that belief; and it is also a fact, that, about that time, a New Star did appear.

Yet, from the very nature of the case, an explanation of a very extraordinary event, — and such the Pilgrimage of the Magi was, — an explanation reaching to causes lying far back, where history is imperfect, must, in a measure, be conjectural; and it would not be reasonable to hold, for a certainty, that, between the Magian Pilgrimage and each and all of the facts of which this explanation consists, there was the direct relation of effect and cause. As to some of them, that relation is a matter of conjecture only; but, still, it is by no means such to all of them. As to some of them — the

expectation among the Jews, for instance — there is only a strong probability of this relation; but, as to others, there is direct evidence of it. Thus, there is evidence in the words of the Magi, that Daniel's prophecy, and the oracle of the Star, were among the causes of their Pilgrimage. And it should be added, that, even if they knew nothing of the Hebrew expectation in their time, they might have arrived at the same feeling, from the time-data in that prophecy. There is no direct evidence that the conjunctions of the planets were observed by them; yet they were astrologers, and those celestial phenomena were so marked and repeated, that the intrinsic probability of this is scarcely less than certainty.

Undoubtedly this explanation does not — it is not possible that it should — include some, perchance many, peculiar, indispensable, providential occurrences in the lives of these Pilgrims, or in the times before them, that directly and powerfully tended towards this memorable Pilgrimage. These will be known only in the time of the resurrection of the just, when all the wonders of God's grace and man's fidelity shall stand revealed. But, on the other hand, there is such fulness in this explanation, that some parts of it might be varied, and yet detract little from its coherence, or omitted, and detract little from its validity. Wherever there is a fact to be explained, — and the Pilgrimage of Magi to Jerusalem is a fact, — an explanation of it, that is clear and perfect, has in itself some evidence of correctness. The explanation, then, given of this Pilgrimage, being made up of facts, and the relations

between it and them being either matters of direct evidence or of strong probability, is such as, in a purely historical inquiry, involving no religious questions, and provoking no hostile feelings and prejudices, would be accepted as so consistent, probable, and complete, as to be beyond reasonable doubt; and an explanation might fall short of this, and yet be a sufficient answer to all who, on historic grounds, have decried this Pilgrimage to Jerusalem as incredible.

The latter part of this explanation, alone, would suffice for this, so far as they are offended at what they term the astrological cause of the Pilgrimage — that is, the appearing of a Star in the Year of our Lord's Birth. The New Star of the Annus Domini is witnessed to by astronomers of yesterday, as the New Star of 1604 is witnessed to by Kepler and other astronomers of to-day. These late astronomers also attest, that, near the time of our Lord's Birth, there were four conjunctions of planets, believed by astrologers to be significant of great events in Judea. This scientific fact, taken in connection with the other, is a suffieient answer to those who, for the reason assigned, have decried this Pilgrimage as a thing incredible; is sufficient to explain what Infidelity has challenged the Church to tell — how, from a Star, the Magi knew the Birth of the King of the Jews.

This very challenge shows that lack of imagination characteristic of all schools of infidelity, under whatever name disguised. Of learning, in the sense of mere heaps of facts, some of them have more than they know

how to use; but not in the sense of having power to discern the spiritual laws expressed, or intimated, in facts. No great learning, even in the lowest sense of the word, was required in professed critics, to know that the astrological map of the heavens corresponded with the map of the earth; and it should not have been difficult for them to have made the easy supposition, that the new Star shone in what was astrologically held to be the Judean quarter of the sky, and there, from its position or time with respect to the planets, indicated, according to the notions of the art, some great event; and that, through the time-data given by the prophet Daniel, or through the wide-spread belief of the time, the Magi readily interpreted this Judean sign to mean the Coming of some mysterious Person in that country. The most recondite and questionable thing in this supposition, sixteen centuries subsequent to the event, was discovered, by a devout astronomer, to have been the fact.

That God ordained Kepler should discover this, is very remarkable; for, if ever, in these latter days, there has been a Magian born, it was Kepler. Diligently to search in nature for intimations of God was the characteristic of the Magi; and this was the breath of life to him, who, through his intuition of relation and harmony pervading all space and time, through his reverential trust in God's word, and through his study of the records of the skies, found the lost fact completing the series of facts that elucidate and confirm the honorable history of his brethren. Thus, as inspired sages wrought more harmoniously together than they were

aware, so the sages who walk with the Lord in the realm of nature are unconsciously harmonious in the results of their divinely-guided lives.

Throughout these inquiries, I have folded the wing of the imagination, and chosen to dwell in the sober precincts of the logical reason; to dream no dreams, though, hereafter, I might wake to find them true; that, on every page, I might command a calm, intelligent assent; yet, here, I cannot but point out to the imagination a correspondence that would have charmed the the soul of Kepler. In the astronomical facts rediscovered by him, when viewed in their relation to the Pilgrimage of the Magi, there is that beautiful symbolism that runs through all the ways of grace, and is the sacred poetry both of nature and of life. The rays of the three planets, near, yet distinct, correspond to the light of nature, of primitive religion, and of Hebraic revelation, blending their influences in the souls of the Wise; and the new Star corresponds to the Greater Light.

Up to the moment when the Star of the Lord shone in the heavens, there seems, in the antecedent events related to the Coming of the Wise Men, nothing, in the strict sense divine, save what was due to the primeval religion, and to the oracles in the sacred books of the Hebrews; and a similar origin of the wide-spread belief of the Orient, that, at that time, a Ruler would go forth from Judea, did not secure, for that belief, *direct* mention on the sacred page. All that prepared the Magi to recognize the Star was bound together by a thread

of divine weaving; but, in it, there was no immediate supernatural intervention. It is not strange, then, that St. Matthew, even if he knew of them, did not record the planetary conjunctions. They were facts of nature, left to be made known to the Church, when most needful to it, by one solemnly elected of God to publish the laws and harmonies of the material universe: that, coeval with the Advent of the Lord of the Heavens to the earth, a new Star shone, heralding this through all the worlds, and dating it through all time; that when He by Whom all things were made, and without Whom, there was not anything, lay in the manger in Bethlehem, the apparent sign of the glory He had before He made the worlds was seen in the Heavens — this, the inspired Evangelist records alike for itself, and for the miracle of its Guiding to its Lord, in virtue of both of which it holds high place on the eternal page.

Not, then, of those planetary phenomena that Kepler rediscovered, but of a new Star, the Magi speak, when they say, they beheld the Star of the King. This harmonizes, exactly and decisively, with their Coming. Their Pilgrimage might have followed upon the conjunction of the planets; yet the faith that braved the toils and dangers of their long road is so high-toned, that it requires that decisive intimation. This accomplished what all else prepared for. It sent them to Jerusalem. History and science elucidate the sublime lesson of the power, the wisdom, and the reward of Faith in the Coming of the Wise Men to the Lord; yet

the Gospel alone gives, what the records of history and the researches of science, though tending that way, lack, the full explanation, on its human side, of that abounding and unshaken confidence with which these Magi proclaimed, in astonished, affrighted, unbelieving Jerusalem, the Birth of its King.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASTROLOGICAL ELEMENT IN THE NARRATIVE.

THE Story of the Wise Men is so fraught with wisdom above the thoughts of men, is so suited to wants and wishes of the soul, that, were it only a tradition, the Christian would feel, and wisely feel, that it must be true. Yet moral, historical, and scientific arguments have been arrayed against it.

The scientific, attempt to oppose to it, especially to what is said of the Star's Guiding, the authority of the science, fondly and admiringly thought most exact and complete; until, a little time ago, the storm of meteors disturbed the calm of the heavens, and the dream of the perfection of Astronomy.

The historical, bear against an event, referred to by no Evangelist or Apostle, save St. Matthew, and with not a line in the writings of its century, as they now exist, that alludes to it. Without formally so doing, I have answered the greater historical arguments against the narrative; and, in another book — on the religious Truth it reveals — I hope so to answer the astronomical, as to illustrate the fact, that, so far from the attempt to make any Scripture seem more credible, by arbitrarily lessening the supernatural element in it, ever succeeding,

the more fearlessly that is set forth in its real grandeur, the more it has power over the reason.

The moral argument against the narrative is this: the outshining of a new Star at the Birth of Jesus, the coincidence of its appearing with the expectation awakened by prophecy, and the Star's Guiding believers in starry influences, countenanced and strengthened the pretended Art of Astrology, which was all delusion and mischief.

The ready horror at everything that even seems to accredit superstitious or unscientific notions, and, so, might turn us back towards the Dark Ages, is such, that it may be well to give a thought to the extent of this alleged strengthening of Astrology. For ages before, and after, St. Matthew's Gospel was written, belief in Astrology was so entire, that it could have received no strength from it. If ever it gave it any, it was at the very time when Astrology fell into discredit, because that, through the teachings of Christianity, man began to attain to humility in the study of nature. If the signs and wonders revealed, as to the Star of the Lord, then made an impression somewhat favorable to Astrology, this was of small account, as Christianity was to put an end to it. The prevailing magic was somewhat confirmed by the wonders wrought by the Apostles; the truths they preached were followed by perversions that, without those truths, had never been; Christianity gave, for the instant, some new strength to superstition; but, what argument against it are these errors, when the fulness of its light was to dis-

pel them forever? Shall the mistakes consequent upon the manifestation of his glory, be charged against the Lord? or shall His works of majesty and grace be barred by human perversions of them? He set the stars in the firmament, with their changes and seasons — the Art of Astrology followed: He set his own Star in the firmament, and some confirmation of the Art followed. For such things as these, was He to stay his hand in Heaven?

But the real strength of the argument against the facts, that the Lord used the astral lore of the Magi as a medium of communication with them, and led them in ways familiar to their thoughts as astrologers, lies not in the harm that followed these things, be that more, or less, or none, but in the idea that they were wrong. This we meet, in part, by being more just to the astrology of the Magi, than when we seemed to concede it was all error and mischief. The germ of oldest science was the divination of a preëstablished resemblance or harmony between the spiritual and material worlds— the grand thought, that all the creation of the one God must be one whole. From this, as from the idea of one God, out of which sprung the idea of one universe, the soul rapidly fell off into low notions of the creation, and of the Creator; but each left its uneffaceable traces on the science and on the religion of the earliest ages. Astrology was one form of the aspiration to verify the oldest, the most religious, of scientific ideas. It held that there is a correspondence and a sympathy between the material and the spiritual worlds, and, hence, it

looked for coincidences between the phenomena in the skies, and the fates of men. The thought is grandly true; but cannot be applied with the minuteness with which astrology claimed to apply it, because the limited faculties of man cannot grasp all those harmonies that make all spirits and all worlds one sentient whole.

Fools mock at the contrasted hope and failure of the astrologer; but high aims, though seldom entirely successful, are as seldom entirely fruitless. All that man accomplishes springs from them. Without the vain aspirations of the youth, would never be achieved the little of the man, that forms so humble a contrast to the visions of the boy; and what is true of the individual is true of the race.

Astrology was not for naught. As Chemistry of Alchemy, so Astronomy was born of Astrology. Astrology was not useless. It is something, that it proved that what it aimed at was impossible, so that, with humbler hope, man might seek the attainable. Next to him who shows that the difficult is possible, is he who shows that it is impossible. Each serves the Lord: the one, by opening a path where none seemed to be; the other, by closing up the road of delusion.

The first chemical experiments were made by Alchemists; the first maps of the heavens, by Astrologers. The art of Astrology, like every human art and every human science, was blended truth and error; and if the Lord could not have conversed with Astrologers, then he cannot converse with men of science at all, in and through their pursuits; and there are no limits to

the exclusion of the Spirit of God from the soul of man that logically follows; for all human conceptions, alike of things material and of things spiritual, have in them some quality of error. If the Lord cannot commune with souls in which vain aspirations are, and thoughts that err, he cannot commune with man. It were better to adore, than to cavil at the self-devotion of his Spirit, who, unrepelled, even by guilt, mercifully follows men, as they wander away from Him, down into the drear wastes of error and sin.

The Wise Men were not only different from those self-styled Magians who disgraced the honor of the name, but were the few, in whom whatever was most spiritual in their order found its most perfect expression. The errors of the Zoroastrian religion, and the darker aspects of their order, have as little to do with our conception of these men, as "the vain traditions" of the Jews, or the cruelty of the Pharisees, with our conception of the believing souls in Jerusalem. These were the elect few of the Jews; those, of the Magi.

Their religion fostered, in the more spiritual of the Magi, a reverential, believing spirit, that looked, in nature and in life, for the presence and purpose of God. In virtue of this God-seeking spirit, the Wise Men, as reverently they watched the stars in their courses, made the sublimest discovery in the heavens ever made by man. Who will restore to Astronomy this lost glory? When will the Magian be born, who, amid the glittering hosts on high, will point out, again, the Star of Bethlehem?

These Magians very truthfully conceived that the God of Heaven was waging real war with sin, and that his triumph over Ahriman would be wrought out, not through the foolishness of culture, philosophy, or science, but by prophets sent from God, of whom the last, mighty to save, as a man, would conquer the Evil One. In spiritual souls, this truth was persuasive to a living faith in God, that waited and watched for His redemption. The God of Heaven honored this spirit in the Wise Men. These Magians watched, without ceasing, in the material and spiritual worlds, for the Divine; and it was divinely appropriate that they should be led to find Him, in whom met Heaven and Earth, Humanity and Divinity.

All the supernatural in the Story of the Wise Men is self-proved: the narrative of their presence with the Lord is self-authenticating throughout, when the natural, in their history, is understood, For the spirit of these men having been such as it was, the Lord must have brought them as near to himself as it was then possible for them to come, and in ways fitted to their religiously scientific spirit.

Wise through faith beyond their knowledge, their hearts were so in sympathy with the purpose of God to "send his own Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that, through Him, the world might be saved," that they believed in a sacred promise of a Redeemer to come; and when these astronomers looked unto the heavens, to behold there the predicted sign of His coming on the earth, the Lord set His bright and

morning Star before them; and when, through Faith, they came to His own city, found there no knowledge of the discovery they made afar off, went out from thence, waited on by no Pharisee, no scribe, no priest, strangers in the Holy Land, seeking, unaided of men, its Lord, the rays of His Star led them, until the attesting splendor stood over where the Lord lay. Science has no story like this, of recognition from the Eternal mind! Religion, few more touching words than these of God's kindness to men in darkness, seeking for the Light; in the night of heathenism, for the Star of Jacob!

Great their Faith; great its reward! The roll of the men of old time who obtained a good report through Faith is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews; the roll of honor of the new time opens with the Wise Men. They preach forever, that to Faith wisdom is given. By Faith they crossed plains, deserts, mountains, and journeyed far to the Holy City. The capital knew not its King. In little Bethlehem they found only a maiden mother tending an infant; yet, with undaunted Faith, "when they saw the Young Child and His mother, they fell down and worshipped Him;" and, setting forth truths greater than they knew, they offered, to the Son of Man and Son of God, myrrh, hinting at the resurrection of the dead; the royal gold; and frankincense that breathes of prayer, — "myrrh to a mortal, gold to a king, frankincense to God."[1]

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[1] This mystic significance of the gifts is marked by all the earlier Christians who refer to them. The learned Arch-

The Mediæval Age, with passion, cried, these men were Kings! Let us catch the thought, roll on the cry. Indeed, they were Kings — of God anointed! — Sovereigns in the realm of truth!

On the bank of the Rhine the zeal of toiling centuries strove to build, to their praise, the noblest fabric of mediæval art; its skyward-pointing spires are yet rising higher and higher toward the heavens; and so the honor that should be given them among men is yet an unfinished thing.

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bishop Trench says, "The earliest writer, I believe, who makes this application, at least of those who have come down to us, is Irenæus." — Star of the Wise Men.

CHAPTER X.

INSPIRATION OF ST. MATTHEW.

THE words of St. Matthew have here been interpreted in the clear light of the idea that they were selected with a thoughtfulness of wisdom. This idea is not altogether in harmony with the notion that the Gospels are rude chronicles, whose power is manifestly divine, because of their humility of style. But it is in harmony with the fact. All Scripture shows that inspiration was given to fitting recipients; and that this fitness depended on mental, no less certainly than on moral, endowments; on qualities of the head, as surely as on those of the heart.

St. Matthew has not the precision of a diffuse style, — if, indeed, such a style ever is precise, — but of a style that, saying little, means much; where every line and word can be justified; and where precision ever is, though, to the superficial eye, it may not seem to be there. Thus, by their title, he exactly describes those who came to Jerusalem, and his geographical phrases are definite.

But, it will be said, this finds too much in his words; all versions of the Gospel overlook his distinction between the East and the Far East; and the general

comment says, these terms signify only that the Wise Men came from one of the four winds. This is true; and because it is so, there is some reason to have charity for those who, in consequence of this failure in interpretation, pronounce their history a fable; and the more reason, as this low interpretation of the Evangelist's words, at the beginning, running through the narrative, debases it into an incongruous legend, where the Magi are dishonored into fortune-tellers, and the Star of the Lord into a Jack-o'-lantern.

But, even with this low notion as to St. Matthew's words, our conclusions can be maintained. Thus far St. Matthew has been vindicated, as any other historian might have been; but the erroneous notions as to the force of some of his words require that the true interpretation of them should be strengthened by conclusions drawn from the fact, that St. Matthew was not a historian merely, but also an Evangelist; from the fact, that the inspired writers sometimes uttered truths, the significance and the relations of which they knew but in part, yet whose expression, having in it a divine element of perfection, has, in time, conveyed to the Church more full and precise ideas than to them.

When, to the high historic qualities of the Evangelists, there was superadded the enlightening, restraining, and guiding of the Spirit of all Wisdom, there was a Gospel, fourfold in form, yet one in spirit; reproducing a Life so mysterious, that, to reproduce it in such perfection, surpassed the human genius. To believe this, is no disparagement of their natural gifts; and their genius

should not be depreciated to honor their inspiration. This honors neither. Those who appreciate them as historians will not doubt their inspiration.

All that sense and genius could, they gave their gospels. Each imparted to his something of his own soul. Beyond this, Divine Wisdom gave to each of the gospels, and to the Gospel as a whole, what human genius was not competent to give — a fulness and precision of wisdom in every line and word. It watched over thoughts, words, images; so adjusting the relations of these, that Scripture is one Scripture. It made it vital *with one life*, breathing through all its forms, whether history, or biography, or precept, or doctrine; whether proverb, or parable, or song, or prophecy, or epistle. Not nicer the adjustments of the human frame, not more wonderful the unity of the world, than the unity of this creation. Hence, in its study, adjustment, relation, harmony should be looked for, as in the study of nature. As there, one thing throws light upon another; as there, analogy, proportion, or resemblance is the great instrument of discovery, whose power is inexhaustible, whose results are so certain, — so it is in the Scriptures: in neither is mechanical cohesion; in each is the unity of Life, and from the same Life-giving Word.

As correspondences in nature are sought for with wide observation and the microscopic eye, so they should be sought for in Scripture; and, as there is no doubt of their reality when once they are seen in nature, however minute or far-severed in space or time, so should

there be higher conviction, even, were it possible, of the reality of the like in this higher world. All Scripture, then, — especially that of the Evangelists, its heart, whence flows the blood, in which is the life, and whither it reflows, — all Scripture, and, most of all, that which reproduces the Life of the Lord, is ever to be studied with inquiry into its relations to all other Scripture.

Something of the undoubting faith in analogy, resemblance, harmony, proportion, and law, that guides science, has quickened the Church in its researches in the world of Scripture, as to doctrine; but less so, as to that wonderful apparatus of personal feelings and incidents, and of great national events of biography and history, through which and in which the doctrines are, in a great measure, revealed and taught. The historical element is the chief element, so far as form goes, in the Scriptures; and there should be the same faith in the precision of its teaching, and the perfection of its relations, that there is in those of purely didactic Scripture.

In all Scripture there is a divine element of certainty; and, for the full understanding of Scripture, it is necessary to compare one part of it with another, in a way that has no parallel in human writings. Hence, in Scripture, words and phrases may have an exactness, a depth or breadth of meaning, and relations to other Scripture, even beyond what they had in the thoughts of the writer. The meaning of the words cannot be changed; but the conception of the writer may receive greater precision, greater depth or breadth of signifi-

cance, while it remains essentially the same; as, in science, a law may have greater exactness, wider compass, and suggest to one mind more relations than to another, and yet be expressed in the same words. The language of Scripture is a fountain, not a reservoir.

St. Matthew wrote his gospel with such accuracy as his best efforts could secure; and, beyond this, with a wisdom that gave to it perfection, alike in itself, and in its relations to other Scripture. If, then, his language has guided us to conclusions, the only objection to which seems to be that they are too exact, and, at the same time, too far-reaching, to be gathered from what many take to be very indefinite words, these things may be referred to his inspiration, as well as to his genius; his inspiration authorizing the giving to terms in his gospel, as part of the whole of Scripture, a precision and a richness of meaning not to be given to independent words.

Thus, the phrases, the East and the Far East, if indefinite in themselves, may become definite, through their use in more ancient Scripture, for Babylonia and Persia. His knowledge of the scriptural relations of what he recorded must have been imperfect. The Lord himself, alone, knoweth them all. No perfect knowledge of them can be predicated, even of the Evangelist. The workmanship was divine, the workman was human. But to overlook relations is not to deny them; and, if he did not know all the relations of what he recorded of the Wise Men to other Scripture, it does not prove that they did not exist.

I would not be misunderstood, as if applying this to

the words before considered. I think it is clear, beyond reasonable doubt, that his own insight into the relations of what he was narrating may have guided, and did guide him to them; that he chose a popular phrase — "from the Far East"— to describe whence the Pilgrims were, not only because it was such, but also because its use in the Old Testament made it so peculiarly significant in pointing out those relations, that he would have been justified in this, had it not been in popular use at all; and also that he added it to the title Magi, to describe them beyond all mistake, because, in the Septuagint, persons so called had been located in Babylonia, that is, in "the East;" and again, that there were other relations he did not point out in terms, — for instance, that between the Oracle of Balaam and the Coming of the Magi, intimated in their own words, — because he thought it needless; and it should be needless. The history of Balaam is one leaf, the history of the Wise Men is another, from the great, marvellous book of God alone — the true history of the world's religion, of which so little is, or can be, known by man; and no one, who has any idea of the unity of Scripture, will doubt the relation between these two leaves of the unrevealed history of the Gentiles, transcribed into the revealed history of the Son of God. The Story of Balaam and of the Wise Men are correlative; they illustrate the whole Gentile religion, revealing that, everywhere, the Spirit strove with men, showing the triumph of grace resisted or obeyed, and the contrast of the results of each in the fates of men.

Correspondences like these are so characteristic of the Bible, that he who does not understand something of them, does not understand the Bible at all. By itself, each might seem a thing of chance; yet the many can have come only from uniform design. Each may be a thread so fine as scarcely to be seen; the many form massive cords, holding the whole of the sacred volume firmly together. Correspondences like these, in a measure, produce that sense of unity often so deeply felt, rather than clearly seen, in the Bible. It is a unity, in a multitude of incidents, described by men to whom only a part thereof was known; unity in truths hinted at by one, partially disclosed by another, revealed by a third, or made clear in the course of events. It is a unity as to truths — some deeper than the intuitions of man, others beyond his experience; a unity in writers thousands of years apart, writing in different countries, and in different languages; a unity that can be explained only by the fact that God was with them.

In the fact that St. Matthew's narrative is a divine record of events especially within a divine economy, there is, also, an independent verification of the conclusion drawn from it as history — that the Pilgrims to Bethlehem were Persians. If the term that points this out be thought somewhat indecisive, it becomes decisive through the consideration, that what the words suggest, at least, as possible, is required by the harmonies of the kingdom of grace; inspiration being supposed, in this, as in so many places, to have guided the writer to a phrase, that was to become more definite to the Church than to him.

For there is a kingdom of grace, having its harmonies, even as the kingdom of nature hath. To those who have no hearts to feel them, they are as if they were not. Their notions as to this kingdom are as blank as those of a blind man as to the kingdom of Light. A man without eyes might grope about, with a tape-measure, among the houses in Jerusalem, and his measurements somewhat avail; of such value are the researches of men like Strauss in the spiritual Jerusalem. As to some things of an unspiritual kind, their fingers may avail something; but the soul-inspiring harmonies of the kingdom of grace, such cannot know. Can men, born deaf, know the symphonies of Beethoven? Such critics of harmonies, poring over the printed notes of "The Creation," and measuring, with scale and dividers, here and there, on the silent page, may detect typographical errors, make some shrewd and more absurd remarks on the number, arrangement, and proportion of the dots, be witty and wise over those who see what they cannot see, feel what they cannot feel, in the mysterious scroll; but, though the mighty master of the organ unroll, in volumes of majestic sound, the music expressed in those mystic characters, all is a blank to them, save what they glean from the mute symbols of a melody they have no faculty to hear. Our knowledge is not to be called in question, because darkened souls, like Renan's, know it not. A world of sight and sound is not less sure, because such men have no hearing and no sight. The spiritual world, with its truths and harmonies, is none the less a world, because they

are dead. Its truths and harmonies are the only realities.

The harmonies of the kingdom of the Lord require that the witnesses of his grace to all nations should have come from the nation that had profited most by his grace. The Lord honors those worthy of honor; and the honor of witnessing first of the nations to his Coming on the Earth could have been won only by the most deserving of the nations of old. That this was the Persian, is known from Scripture. With this, all else that is known of them accords. Viewing it in the light of human passions, their preëminence might be denied: it might be said, the state of the Great King was less than that of Augustus; the glory of Cyrus is pale before that of Alexander; the philosophy of the Greeks outvies that of the Magi; the beauty of Grecian art makes comparison with it idle. But the worth of a people is not to be determined by splendor of palaces, though the earth has known of regal state nothing more sublime than the court of the Great King; nor by armies, though the Persian swept "from India to Ethiopia." It is the religious element in the national character, whose presence in one people, more than in another, makes that people more in favor with God, and should make them higher in honor with man. The Athenians worshipped the cunning work of the mortal hand of Phidias; the Romans, a deified Emperor; Persia, the God of Heaven; and the God of Heaven appointed the Persian, who built no altars to the starry hosts, no temple to gods of gold or stone, to build for

Him his own house in Jerusalem. When, therefore, his Evangelist describes the Witnesses of the Nations to the Advent of the Lord of the Nations by a term that is the distinctive title of the Sacred Order of the Persians, though sometimes used in another sense, it is not to be doubted that the Pilgrims, thus divinely described, were Persians, since, thus, there is found, in their Witness to the Lord, the perfection belonging to the harmonies of the Kingdom of Grace.

The fact, that the Persians rejected Christ, might lead us to doubt whether the Wise Men were Persians, were it not for the more strange and mournful fact, that the most faithful and the most favored of the nations, the chosen and peculiar people, rejected the Master, in Person. Each has been severely punished. But the finger of the Lord traced for the Persians the bounds of their habitation. He has preserved their race; and, in spite of long centuries of demoralization, they are, to-day, the finest people of Asia.

Of the Shemitic family of nations, only the Hebrews of old, of the Aryan family, only the Persian, can be said to have kept the faith. The Persians restored the Hebrews to their own country; and, in the fulness of time, Hebrew Apostles, going out from thence, taught the truth anew to the Aryan nations, who then received again the priceless inheritance they had wasted in riotous living, and more than they had before. The Jew and the Persian — let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall — rejected the Word made flesh, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express

image of his Person; yet the Jew and the Persian abide the time, when the nations that are now, in their stead, the worshippers of God, — for no man cometh to the Father but by the Son, — shall return to them all they received from them, and more. The set time cometh when the great cycle of the mercy of God to these nations will be rounded into its predicted fulness of completion. The set time cometh when Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down of the Gentiles, and when the Persians will follow their Wise Men of old.

CHAPTER XI.

SUMMARY.

This explanation of the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem has, here and there, something of the manner of a defence of the evangelical narrative. It has been constrained to this by the tone of faith within the Church, lowered by the too prevailing unbelief of the world — the reflex of an effect on the world produced by some lack of fulness of faith within the Church itself, as coldness in the extremities of the body is caused by feeble pulsations of the heart, and then this coldness reacts on the heart.

With some, the guarded movement of such argument may chill the glow of feeling; with some, the first knowledge of a doubt may be given in the answer to it: yet something of this manner seems to be required by the peculiarities of an age whose spirit summons before it all times, all institutions, all theories of morals, of society, of government, of art — all science and all creeds; and, with somewhat of keener intuition and a larger experience than former ages, would weigh all that has been, and is, and is to be, in its scanty and ill-adjusted balance. To call it an age of unbelief is rather extreme; but it is not an age of faith, though abounding

in credulity. It is an age of inquiry, when "many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased."

In the presence of its restless propensity to search into everything, the Church, for her own sake, and for that of the world, may well mark the deep foundations of her walls, and tell her battlements; she may well survey, in accordance with the canons of modern historical criticism, *as by her adapted to her own field*, her treasures of history; she may well strive to commend her sacred records, and all that in them is, to her own critical reason; with greater zeal than ever before, may well endeavor to clear up the obscure, to harmonize seeming contradictions, and to confirm the truth of the Scriptures, in ways that the spiritual wants of other times did not so urgently require.

It is well the infidel should see that the faith of the Church is as intelligent as it is to him mysterious. To let him see less than this, is to give him over to unbelief. But the heart determines the intellect. Truth not felt by the heart cannot be known as truth by the mind. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The most, then, that can be done, is to strengthen in the Church her own perceptions of her own truths, that from her there may be more and more breathed into the world a feeling, that there is a known world above its knowing; that even as one born blind longs to see the blue heavens on high, and the firm earth, he is convinced are, but beholds not, so man may yearn for a heart that may see God.

Historical evidence cannot exorcise the demon of un-

belief. Historical evidence addresses the mind: he lodges in the heart, whose subtle influences sway the intellect. But the Christian may have less or more of his own light, perceptions less or more clear, truths less or more perceived in their harmonies; and in proportion as his own knowledge of his own realm of knowledge is increased, his soul will have more of strength; the world will, more and more, be constrained to feel the inferiority of her knowledge; and thus the Church will, at length, regain in herself, and establish in the world, the full conviction of her intellectual supremacy.

The argument, then, in this inquiry, is addressed to Christians. If it quicken their faith, it will, at length, through them, reach the unbeliever, so far as he has the capacity to be reached by it. As free citizens, then, of the City of God, with the ideas and prepossessions belonging to such, knowing that the thoughts of the Divine Spirit run through the Ages, and that slight indications in Scripture point to His far-continuing purposes and distant but foreseen ends, let us recall the argument that has passed before us. First: It has been seen that the Magi believed that the God of Heaven intervened in the affairs of men, and that Ormazd, in his appointed times, would send on earth prophets, who would work wonders for the Kingdom of Light, and the last and greatest of whom would utterly destroy the Kingdom of Darkness. Second: That there was with the Magi a Hebrew prophet, who foreknew the Coming of the Lord, and the Time thereof, having power and opportunity to impress these facts on them; and who

could point, in confirmation of what he revealed, to an oracle not from Hebrew lips, in which it was foretold that a Star would be the Sign of His appearing. Third: That there were data from which the Magi might have computed the time of this prediction, and, consequently, of the starry omen; that this prophecy and calculation might have been preserved in writing by them, and were not likely to have been lost in an order professionally conservative of sacred records, traditions, and mystic lore; and that the expectation of some spiritual Ruler to be born in the house of Jacob, thus enkindled among the Magi, might have been kept from dying out, by the presence of Hebrews in Persia. Fourth: That certain of the Magi were dwelling or sojourning in the country between the Tigris and the Euphrates, at a time when the expectation was deeply inwrought into the minds of some of the multitude of Hebrews living in that region, that the appointed hour of the Birth of their Messiah in Judea was nigh; and that, about that time, there were displayed, in the heavens, signs in the planets, believed by these Magi, as astrologers, to portend that some great event had come, or was about to come to pass in Judea — signs awakening them to diligent watch for the predicted Star. Fifth: That these Magi journeyed from Babylonia on a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and proclaimed in that City, in the very terms of the Hebrew Prophet, and with a clear reference to the ancient, extra-Judean oracle, that they had seen the Star of the King of the Jews. Thus what St. Matthew records is, to this extent, explained,

and so confirmed. The Pilgrimage itself makes it probable that certain other events took place; and these probable events, taken together with other known events, explain the Pilgrimage. It thus ceases to be an isolated thing, pressing on belief with the heavy weight of anything, however well attested, that cannot be connected to aught previous as its intelligible reason, and so seeming an effect without a cause; and it is, at once, placed in a line with other facts; for all history is a chain of recorded and inferred events. From facts that, appearing of record, are supposed to be known, other facts, not of record, are inferred; and this must be accepted as history, or there can be no history. A probability that things were so is all that can be attained to, as to the greater part of human affairs; and this of things in the immediate present, as well as in the remote past. Such a reasonable probability is all that can be attained to as to the course of events preceding the outshining of the Star, that, in connection with it, led the Magi to Jerusalem; and this is all that the wants of Faith require. For it is enough to say to those who assume that there can be no explanation of such a Pilgrimage, it might have been in this way; while it is freely and gladly admitted, that this touching lesson of the condescending mercy of God, this high example of faith in man, must forever depend on the sole and sufficient witness of one, who was not only a truthful historian, but also a divinely-inspired Evangelist.

Thus far, purely historical or scientific confirmations of it have been marked in this review of trains of events

that seem related to the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem; but, to the Christian mind, there is evidence for it of a somewhat different kind. The Christian Church, like the Hebrews of old, has ever held that Balaam prophesied of the Messiah. "There shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,"[1] — according to the ideas of him who spake, and those who heard it — foretold a King, of whom a Star in heaven would be the sign; and, as this was the only way in which this oracle could be understood by them, it is the only way in which it should be interpreted; and it was thus interpreted by the Jews. The attestation is correspondent with the prediction. Both alike — prophecy and witness — are from out the Gentile world. Each is a testimony to the Lord of the nations from without the elect nation; and this correspondence is the more complete, as each testimony comes from those whom the world believed to have mystic power to read in the book of God's secrecy.

The prophecy was uttered to kings, militant against the people of God, in their pride of place and power, as, in arms, they stood to bar the way of Israel into the Land of Promise and of rest. Its fulfilment was uttered to Herod, the friend of Cæsar, and so to powers of the world, in whose hearts was the intent to bar the way of the Lord to his rightful kingdom over all the earth.

It is most reasonable to suppose, that, if a Star was

[1] Numbers xxiv. 17.

foretold, its appearing would be told to Jerusalem, and to all the world; that when the sign was visible to human eyes, there would be something providential that would call to it the attention of the Jews, and ever afterward fasten upon it the thought and the memory of man. This — wanting which the annals of our Faith had seemed manifestly imperfect — the narrative in St. Matthew supplies; and it agrees with what the harmonies of a plan predetermined, from the first, in the thought of God, would seem to human intellects to require, — judging, as such can only wisely judge, of the thoughts of God after the event; for though to foreknow the ways of God is given only to inspired souls, yet to see the fitness of beauty in His work, once visibly wrought out, whether in nature, or, more marvellous still, in the realm of life, is the appropriate office of the God-given intellect of man.

Again: in these few strangers in Bethlehem, the Church sees the prophetic types and prophecy of the many, who, after them, were to come from every nation under heaven; and, thus viewed, their presence is a sign, that, disclosing its significance afterwards, authenticates that presence, by proving there was in it something divine. What is written of these strangers at the cradle of the Lord is a parable of prophetic meaning, reaching far onward, and reciting the future of His kingdom. Events in the lives of men are often ordered with a dramatic propriety, that reveals to the believing spirit the intervention of higher powers in the concerns of mortals; and if ever this is manifest, we

may well believe it was so in that Life for whose manifestation the Life of man was made. The illumined sages of the dark heathen world seek the shrine of truth, and the place where the Lord was to be born, pointed out to them by its priests, but, without their further aid, come to the cradle of the Messiah. No long procession of priests, no Sanhedrim, marshals these Pilgrims to the shrine. Mysterious picture of what is to be — the Jews not there, yet there the Representatives of the Nations of the Earth!

Again: in the strangers who came and worshipped the Infant Lord, the Church, in virtue of that vision which belongs to her because she is the Church, recognizes the Witnesses of the Grace of the Universal Lord to all nations — the Representatives of the Wise and Good of the World. Thus viewing them, the main fact in their history authenticates itself. The Reason demands it; the soul is evidence for it: for if, as many insist, — perchance seeking thus to convict the Scripture of narrowness and partiality, — the Universal Lord, pitying all nations, denied grace to none, He must have determined the course of nations, other than the Hebrew, with reference to His Coming; and all reason calls aloud for some recognition of this by those nations; for the soul of man catches something of the thought of God, awakens to some foresight of what He is bringing to pass in the earth, when events of a world-wide concern, ordered from afar, converge to His aim, and His preparation points to His intent. Thus, in the sacred Eclogue of Virgil, that illustrates the affinity

of prophet and bard, the glowing presentiment of an auspicious dominion awoke. Thus it was, that, near the Christian era, old Hebrew prophecy, foretelling that dominion, so began to harmonize with the presentience of man, that it was commonly talked of through all the East. But since "the end and aim of all human history was to prepare the way for Christ's appearing," the Reason, unsatisfied even with these intimations of a prescience in man of the kingdom of Heaven, demands from out the heart of the expectant world a more marked recognition of the Coming of the Lord; expects of his providence something, in the Israel outside of Israel, more distinctly corresponding to the revelation made to Simeon, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, and to the shepherds, to whom the angel told, "unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." By its answer to these requirements, the Story of the Wise Men lays strong hold on the reason of the Church: it lays strong hold, too, on the heart of the Church; for in the Coming of the Wise Men she finds the assurance of her earnest, pleasing hope — that all who sought for Him were guided of the Lord. In them, her oft-recurring question, as she muses on the Grace of other days, — How near to the Lord did the nearest to Him of the heathen come? — is answered, when the Representatives of the Wise and Good of the world "saw the Young Child."

As nothing comes by chance in the kingdom of Nature, so nothing comes by chance in the kingdom of

Grace. As the West did not keep the tradition of a Saviour to come so well as did the East, it is in accordance with the law uttered by the Messiah, — "to him that hath shall be given,"— that Magi from the Far East were the first-fruits of the heathen.

Thus the Law, under which Truth is revealed and Grace is given, thus the presentiments of the soul, harmonize with the statement of St. Matthew — that, from the people who had most faithfully kept the Truth revealed to the Fathers of mankind, from an order of Sages over whom Daniel presided, from that country where Esther reigned a Queen, came the Witnesses of the Nations to the cradle of the Lord.

APPENDIX.

I. THE EAST AND THE FAR EAST.

II. RELATION OF THE PERSIAN AND THE HEBREW RELIGIONS.

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APPENDIX.

THE EAST AND THE FAR EAST.

In Chapter II., the meaning of these terms, as used by St. Matthew, is determined by geographical and historical considerations. As that Chapter, in its present form, sufficiently accomplishes its immediate purpose, and the longer consideration of its subject there, would break in too much on the unity of the book, I have transferred to this place an important part of it, as originally written. It points out a relation between the two Greek terms used by St. Matthew and two corresponding words in the Hebrew, that justifies the explanation of his use of the former, so far as it depends upon antecedent Hebraic usage; and it answers objections that may be brought against the positions taken in that Chapter.

In descriptive terms the Hebrew language was very rich.[1] It had five names for the West, and seven for the South. For the East it had two, Kedem and

[1] "No less than four different Hebrew words are rendered in English by the term *valley*." — Robinson's Physical Geography of the Holy Land, Sec. II. p. 70.

Mizrach. Mizrach meant *the rising*, i. e., of the sun.[1] Kedem meant *before*.

It was indifferent whether Kedem or Mizrach was used, when direction merely was meant. In other cases, there was a difference in their expression of their common idea. The more poetical and imaginative Mizrach had the wider meaning. Each carried the eye in an easterly direction; but Mizrach farther than Kedem; as in these sentences, where they are used together: "on the east side eastwards,"[2] "eastwards towards the sun-rising." Mizrach is used when the East is the antithesis of the West, as in this line, "as far as the East is from the West;"[3] or of any other quarter of the globe; or where it is intended to make the impression of distance strong.[4] But when the four quarters of the globe are designated, Kedem, the more definite of the two words, is used; as in this sentence: "Thou shalt spread abroad to the West and to the East, and to the North and to the South."[5]

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[1] This is sometimes joined with it. — Deut. iv. 41. 47; Jud. xi. 18; Is. xli. 25.

[2] Ex. xxvii. 13; Josh. xix. 12.

[3] Ps. ciii. 12; Ps. l. 1.; cxiii. 3; Josh. xi. 3; Zach. viii. 7.

[4] Dan. viii. 9; xi. 44; Amos viii. 12; Ps. cvii. 3; Is. xliii. 5.

[5] Gen. xxviii. 14, and in Gen. xiii. 14; Job xxiii. 8, 9; Ezek. xlvii. 17, 18, 19, 20. See, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, the admirable Article on the East, whose value is out of all proportion to its brevity, by W. L. Bevan, the first to note the distinction between the two forms of *Anatole* in Matthew ii., and their relations to the two Hebrew words Mizrach and Kedem.

Each has, at times, a geographical sense; Mizrach rarely, Kedem frequently. This sense corresponds to their respective compass. Thus, Mizrach, used with a geographical significance, twice denotes Persia;[1] while Kedem never crosses the eastern line of the Plain of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Usually the geographical sense of Mizrach was not definite in itself, but from the context. Kedem, as has been shown in Chapter II., though its application differed in different ages, was used as a geographical name, whose well-established and well-defined meaning was clear and sure in itself.

After the Captivity, the Jews of Palestine spoke as their native tongue a local dialect of that wide-spread Shemitic language known as the Syro-Chaldaic, or the Aramean, — a language closely allied to the Hebrew. At the Christian era, they also spoke an Oriental and Hebraized dialect of the Greek language. The correctness of these two propositions is here assumed without argument, save the remark that there is evidence of the latter in the following narrative, taken from the twenty-first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: —

"The Jews which were of Asia, when they saw Paul in the Temple, stirred up *all the people*, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help. This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. . . . And *all the city was moved*, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the Temple. And forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about

[1] Isa. xli. 2; xlvi. 11.

to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that *all Jerusalem* was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them; and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done. And some cried one thing, some another *among the multitude;* and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For *the multitude of the people* followed after, crying, away with him."

In this graphic picture, it is seen that the whole city was drawn together, and not merely the Greek-speaking Jews of Asia, who at the first "*stirred up all the people.*" Paul then besought of the captain of the guard that he might speak to them. "And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying, Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you."

This note of the language that he chose to use makes it sure that he had the choice of another language, which the people would have understood, and were accustomed to hear. It is clear that this is so, even without the remark which St. Luke interposes between these words

and the speech that followed, — "and when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence." St. Paul here showed the same address as when he spake on Mars' Hill to the men of Athens; and somewhat conciliated the people because he appealed to their national feelings by speaking to them in their native tongue, and not in the Greek, which he might have used.

As these two languages had then for a long time been in common use among the Jews of Palestine, their flexible Greek dialect must have been somewhat modified by their more rigid native dialect; and there is this direct evidence that the word *Anatole* did undergo some change of form in the local Greek of Palestine. In classical Greek, as used for the East, it is in the plural, and without the article, but in the Greek of Josephus it is to be found in the singular and with the article.[1] This fact will hereafter serve another important purpose; here, it is used only as proof that *Anatole* was somewhat altered, as to its form, in Palestinian Greek. For Josephus prided himself on his Greek, and so it is clear that in his departures, as to this word, from classical usage, he unwittingly followed the usage of the

[1] Antiq. I. i. 3. *πρὸς τὴν ἀνατολήν* God planted a Paradise in the East. De Bell. Jud. II. x. 2; III. iii. 3; V. iv. 2., xii. 2. In these places it does not have the article. He uses it in the singular with the article. Antiq. VIII. iii. 2, 6; *πρὸς τὴν ἀνατολήν*. Proem De Bell. Jud. II. xvi. 4; IV. x. v; VI. vi. 1. He also used it in the plural, both without the article and with it. Antiq. V. i. 22; VIII. v. 3.

Greek he was accustomed to speak as a Jew of Palestine.

It is so natural, that it may almost, or quite, be taken for certain, that the native dialect of the Hebrews conformed to itself some of the more common descriptive terms in the flexible Greek dialect, when each had been spoken for some considerable time by that people; and it is so reasonable to suppose that the Hebrew terms Mizrach and Kedem thus came to have equivalents in Palestinian colloquial Greek, that a very little direct evidence would establish it as a fact.[1] The usage of St. Matthew is such evidence. For this theory clearly and satisfactorily explains his usage, and the meanings given to his terms, in conformity with it, are upheld by such a variety of historical and geographical facts, and by such general considerations, all harmonizing in one result, that there is no reason to doubt that thus his terms are correctly interpreted.

It is true that no trace of his usage is to be found in the Septuagint. But should it be looked for there? The scholars, who made this translation of the Hebrew

[1] As to the presence in the Aramean language, as spoken by the Jews in Palestine, of terms substantially like those of the Hebrew, — which is all that the argument requires, — it may be said, both were such terms that this could hardly have been otherwise; and Kedem as a proper name would certainly keep some place when the kindred Arameau was substituted for the Hebrew. The Hebrew was a cultivated dialect of the Arameau, the original language. Now, Mizrach and Kedem are found in the very oldest Hebrew, in the familiar converse of the Patriarchs.

Bible, conformed its Greek, so far so they well could, to classical usage. They do not attempt to give exact equivalents for Mizrach and Kedem. They do not try to discriminate between them. They render both by the plural of *Anatole* without the article. Their translation was made long before the time of St. Matthew's Gospel. It was made outside of Palestine; and it is not probable that the Greek spoken by the LXX. was much, if any, modified by a Hebrew dialect spoken at the same time with it;[1] while the explanation of the two forms of *Anatole* in St. Matthew is based upon the facts that for a long time two dialects had been spoken by the Jews in Palestine, and that his usage was local and colloquial.

It may be inquired, whether the true answer to the earnestly-debated question, Did St. Matthew write his Gospel in Aramean or in Greek? together with that of the questions connected with it, would confirm or invalidate the opinion here maintained? However that problem may be settled, its decision would not affect it much, if at all. That question has usually been discussed as if the supposition must be, that he wrote it only in one language. But he may have composed his Gospel in one of the two dialects which he spake, and then have turned it into the other; have first written it in his native tongue, and then have re-written it in

[1] It is worthy of note in this connection, that Philo-Judæus, one of the most learned of the Alexandrian Jews, of the first century, seems to have been ignorant of the Hebrew language.

that Greek with which he and his countrymen were so familiar. This he could easily and quickly have done, as the manuscript is so brief; and it would seem that he could hardly have done otherwise. By this natural and probable supposition various difficulties may be easily solved, and all the facts in the case readily harmonized into a consistent whole. If he did so, how very natural it would be for him to give the equivalents in the Greek dialect for the two words in his native tongue; and he would do this if he composed his Gospel *in* the Greek only.

Against the whole argument in Chapter II. — of which this Appendix is to be taken as a part — to prove that in St. Matthew, τῃ ἀνατολῃ, the East, means Babylonia, and ἀνατολων, the Far East, means Persia, there are some facts that might be alleged.

1. No parallel usage is to be found in the whole compass of the Hebraic-Greek literature from the time of the close of the Canon of the Old Testament to that of the final ruin of the Jewish nation, about fifty years after the Fall of Jerusalem, in the reign of the Emperor Adrian (A. D. 120), when the Jews were utterly driven out of Judea.[1]

Before attempting to reply to the argument embodied in this statement, it may be well to restate the proposition against which it may be alleged, viz.: That in his Gospel, St. Matthew used the same local, popular

[1] See Translation of Münter's *Jewish War*, by W. W. Turner, in the Bibliotheca Sacra, No. III., 1843.

names for Babylonia and Persia that he would have used in common conversation; and to call to mind that with other evidence for this proposition, there were these facts, that he was an unlettered man, and wrote primarily and peculiarly for his countrymen.[1]

The argument before stated, as one that might be brought against this proposition, has much of seeming force, but there are several considerations, some of which singly, and certainly all of them collectively, seem to be a sufficient answer to it. First. The verification and illustration from general miscellaneous literature of any historical or geographical phrase is quite a thing of chance. That it is possible to trace so clearly and fully in the literature of the Hebrews the use of the term, the East, with its different meanings, in different circumstances and times, is remarkable. It is a fair illustration of the wonderful clearness with which the whole life of the Hebrews of old, their manners, customs, modes of speech and forms of thought, their country and themselves, are mirrored in their Scripture — a minuteness, a fulness, a faithfulness of national self-portraiture, that makes their literature such

[1] It would strengthen the argument that follows, here to add — *in Judea:* and, from an inquiry made as to the date, the plan of his Gospel, and the circumstances in which it was written, it seems to me that there are very strong reasons to think that it would thus more exactly state the fact. But to draw out the evidence of this would lead far away, and the statement made in the text, the correctness of which will be generally conceded, so far suffices for my purpose, that this may be dispensed with.

as it should be, since it is that of the people and the land that are the centre of all human memory.

Second. The clear and thorough understanding of the position, against which this argument may be alleged, goes far to answer it. For the usage in question is not that of a man of the schools, writing in the artificial style of rhetoricians, but of a man of the people, who in this case chose to use local and colloquial terms, idioms of the popular speech. If so, the probability is strong indeed that general literature will not illustrate and verify his usage and meaning. Thus, in this country, some years since, a series of political letters were published in a volume called "Letters from Down East." All understood by this phrase, the State of Maine; but if, some thousands of years hence, this book, by some strange chance, shall have survived the mutations of states and of language, it is quite possible that all the learned geographies and histories of this time and nation, then extant, might then be searched in vain to find out what was meant by a phrase now so familiar to the lips of a part of our people, and through them known to the whole.

Third. The literature referred to, as now extant, is by no means large. It may be said to consist of the Apocrypha, the New Testament, the writings of Philo and Josephus, and perhaps some small part of the Apocryphal Gospels.[1] Now, surely, it would not be

[1] These would not come within the later of the termini before assigned to this literature, but it is hardly certain that any part of them belongs to it, and in other respects

strange if the writings of a single English author should not furnish any illustration of some peculiar English phrase, yet there are English authors whose writings exceed in compass the whole of this literature. More than half of it is so purely of a didactic, moral, and religious kind, that it must in a great measure be laid out of the account. Almost all of it was written outside of Palestine, so that a local Palestinian usage, even were it more than a colloquial and popular expression, would not be found or referred to in it, except by rarest accident, the merest chance. Thus, for these reasons, it is not to be looked for in the writings of Philo, nor in parts of the Apocrypha ascribed to Alexandrian Jews. It is also to be remembered that in most of the lands in which the Jews were found, St. Matthew's names for Babylonia and Persia would not have been locally appropriate; and, that a Jew of Palestine could have found, in the Greek, names he might think more fitting, as more generally intelligible.

In the New Testament there is but one place where to look for this usage; and that is in the enumeration by St. Peter of the countries from which there were Jews present in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost.[1] Even then as he was speaking to an assembly largely made up of men from foreign parts, it is by no means certain that he would use a local phrase, or, if he did, St. Luke may have translated this into the common speech

that date is so satisfactory, that it would be hypercritical to object to it on this account.

[1] Acts ii. 9, 10, 11.

of the world. But the Apostle's enumeration, though comprehensive, is not exhaustive. He neither mentions Babylonia, nor the great Jewish settlement beyond the Tigris, in Adiabene, the seat of the old Assyrian kingdom, to which King Agrippa said the Jews of Palestine looked so earnestly for aid in their great war with Rome. Perhaps, this was in both cases because the fact was so well known and apparent; for he mentions some countries, the representatives from which must have been few indeed. He names Parthians and Medes from beyond the Tigris; Elamites from near the southern part of the Country of the Two Rivers; dwellers in Mesopotamia, its northern part; but those of its great central region are not spoken of. Nor is there any mention of *the country* of Babylonia in the New Testament, save that of St. Matthew; though the name of the City of Babylon occurs in the Apocalypse, and in the First Epistle of St. Peter.

The volumes of Josephus are freighted with miscellaneous lore, but the second proposition stated above almost forbids any hope of finding in them the popular, colloquial phrase of St. Matthew. And more than this, he could not have used it, for this decisive reason, which applies with equal force to Philo-Judæus: *In their writings that have come down to us, they addressed the Roman world; and, in their time, with the Greeks and the Romans the East was the name for Syria.*

The conclusion, then, is, that the argument against the interpretation that has been given to St. Matthew's terms, from the absence of similar usage in the Hebraic-

Greek literature referred to, is found, on examination, to have little or no appreciable weight.

2. Next, let us consider the argument against this interpretation, in the fact that ancient tradition makes the Wise Men Arabs. In the second century, Justin Martyr speaks of them as from Arabia.[1] Justin was born at Shechem, in Samaria, which might seem to give very especial weight to his opinion. But, in history, language, and origin, the people of Samaria were distinct from the Jews of Judea and Galilee, and the reasons given for St. Matthew's usage by no means apply with the same force to the Samaritans.[2]

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[1] *Οἱ ἀπο Ἀραβιας Μαγοι.*— Dial. cum. Tryph. Sec. 78, 102.

[2] Though not strictly in place here, the following note is too important to be omitted. Some may think, that if the explanation of St. Matthew's terms herein maintained be correct, there would necessarily be evidence of this in the Syriac Testament, because of the likeness of its language to that of the Palestinian Jews of the first century. If so, they do not clearly mark how strictly this theory is limited to the Jews of Judea and Galilee. The theory is, that the usage, which was coming in just before the exile, became an idiom of theirs after their return from the country of their exile, in consequence of all their relations with it.

Of the area of such phrases the limits sometimes are wide and vague; sometimes small and sharply defined. The use of the East, for the State of Maine, with good reason so often referred to, aptly illustrates this also. It is colloquial in about two thirds of Massachusetts — a State somewhat smaller than Palestine — and in half of New Hampshire; while in the Western parts of those states it is not common. Though at first the cause of this is not very apparent, somewhat of geographical and historical explanation might be given of it; but the point here is the limitation only.

More than this; — Justin was a Greek, the son of Priscus, the grandson of Bacchius, one of a colony planted in Samaria by the Emperor Vespasian; and his parentage makes it probable that he knew no language but his native Greek. If so, the mere fact that he was born in Samaria — it is not certain that he grew up there, and he seems to have lived in Italy — hardly makes him a more decisive authority as to the meaning of a local phrase of Hebraic origin in the popular speech of Judean and Galilean Jews, than if he had been born in Athens, or in Ephesus, where he held his Dialogue with Trypho.

The Jew who furnished Celsus, in the second century, with some of his arguments against Christianity, calls the Wise Men, Chaldeans. The Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy speaks of them as foretold by Zoroaster.[1] These facts are, in themselves, of slight consequence, though they point in the right direction; and are mentioned here only as indications that from a

[1] Evangelium Infantiæ, Chap. VII. Et factum cum natus esset Dominus Jesus Bethlehemi urbe Judeæ, tempore Herodis Regis; ecce, magi venerunt ex Oriente Hierosolymas, quemadmodum prædixerat Zoradascht. And it came to pass when the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, a city of Judea, in the time of Herod the King, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem according to the prophecy of Zoradascht (Zoroaster). See Jones on the Canon, Oxford, 1718, vol. ii. p. 172. The date of this Apocryphal Gospel is very uncertain. Some parts of it may be as old as the second century, others are thought to be interpolations of a much later date.

very early period there was that uncertainty as to what St. Matthew meant, which might well have arisen from his use of a local idiom, whose significance was clear and exact only to the Jews of Palestine, — an uncertainty easily accounted for by the fact that with the Fall of Jerusalem there began to open a wide and deep gulf of separation, dividing both Christians and Jews from the Holy Land.

Some of the Fathers — Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, Epiphanius — thought, as Justin did, that the Wise Men were Arabians. But in this case, their authority is fairly counterpoised, and more, by the higher authority and very significant language of Chrysostom; who, in his comment on Matthew ii., though he could not have been ignorant of this tradition, again and again assumes the fact that the Wise Men were Persians, and as if it were a thing certain beyond all doubt; as when he says, "The Jews hear first from the language of Persia, what they would not hear from their own prophets;" and again, "Wherefore this double flight? that of the Wise Men to Persia? that of the Child to Egypt?"

The former opinion may have arisen from the old use, so frequent in the Hebrew Scriptures, of the name, the East, for the Desert. This usage, though obsolete in St. Matthew's time, was quite likely to mislead men, not natives of Palestine, and deeply wise, rather than critically learned, in the Scriptures. It might have originated, in those uncritical ages, even from the gifts of the Magi, as they were all products of Arabia. But they were not exclusively such; and they were all port-

able articles of merchandise. Gold was a common gift, and frankincense was much used in Persia. "Arabia was required to furnish annually to the Persian crown a thousand talents weight of frankincense; and there is reason to believe that this rare spice was largely employed about the Court, since the walls of Persepolis have several representations of censers, which are sometimes carried in the hand of an attendant, while sometimes they stand on the ground immediately in front of the king."[1] Without a present, no Asiatic king, no satrap, no sheik even, is approached. Those gifts the Magi brought were such as any persons might have brought who sought kingly audience; and though they may point a conjecture, they determine nothing as to the country of the Wise Men.

As Arabia was adjacent to Judea, this opinion may seem to have some countenance, from the fact, that to many the words of St. Matthew have seemed to imply that the Wise Men came very soon after the Nativity. Whether they do imply it, is very questionable. But, however this may be, the date of the Mystery of the Incarnation, and of the outshining of the Star, may have been that of the Annunciation.

It may be thought, that both of the families of Abraham, the children of Ishmael as well as the children of Jacob, would have paid early homage to his Son; but while the world-embracing symbolism of the worship of the Child thus shrinks into a family significance, it seems

[1] Rawlinson's Five Great Monarchies, Vol. IV. chap. iii. page 164.

inconsistent with the laws of the Kingdom of Grace, that this homage should have been paid by degenerate Arabs, who had departed farther from the Truth than some not of the blood of Abraham.

"The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . All they from Sheba shall come, they shall bring gold and incense."[1] "The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. . . . And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." Some of the Fathers thought that these prophecies foretold the Wise Men. If this were so, they must have been Arabians. Now, in a certain sense, to apply these prophecies to the Wise Men may be right. Men of high rank they were—forerunners and prophetic types of kings to come after them; in them the prophecy "kings shall come," began to have its germinant fulfilling; and the words "he shall live" may be a prophetic allusion to Herod's attempt to murder Jesus, as well as to his resurrection from the dead; but the Wise Men were not kings; and there is one decisive reason why they could not have been those who were to come from Sheba with gold and incense, for in this very Gospel of St. Matthew our Lord speaks of Sheba as *the South*,[2] and his Evangelist says, the Wise Men were *from the Far East*.

3. From the very old opinion that the Wise Men were Arabians, let us now turn to a very new notion, unknown to all antiquity — that the word in the second and ninth verses rendered the East, has there no local

[1] Isaiah lx. 3, 6; Psalm lxxii. 10, 15. [2] Matt. xii. 42.

significance whatever, and means *the rising*. "Where is He that is born, for we have seen His Star in its rising?"

I premise its examination by saying, that if its correctness could be conceded, the argument in Chapter First of this book, proving that the Wise Men were Persians, would remain just as before. Its demonstration of that fact is not touched at all by this interpretation.

But its correctness, or even its plausibility, cannot be conceded. It were to be wished, that those who invented it had carefully considered and plainly told what this strange rendering means. They may suppose some astronomical significance in the term, as the rising of a planet or of a constellation before the sun, was a notable fact in the ancient science of the stars. If such were the meaning, then there must have been a star known to these Persians as the Star of the King of the Jews; and, some reason why an especial significance attached to its heliacal rising in that year: either of which consequences, if this be the notion, are sufficient to discredit it.

It is more probable to suppose that they would have the Star's "rising" taken as equivalent to its outshining. Against this there are several reasons.

First. If such be the meaning of the Greek, the way it is expressed is awkward and odd.

Second. It has been the concurring opinion of all Christian ages that the words of the Wise Men express a sudden outshining of the Star, and this while the

term *Anatole*, as used by them, has always been taken as having a local significance. In the novel sense sought to be fixed upon it, the word, then, is superfluous; and if so, it is the only superfluous word in St. Matthew.

Third. If it means the rising, "we should expect to find αὐτου, if not here," that is, in verse second, "certainly in verse ninth." — Alford.

Fourth. Because the antithesis between the East and the place where the Child was born, "obviously bring out a local difference." — Meyer.

Fifth. Because this rendering "is in opposition to the apparently unanimous opinion of the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and other ancient versions." — Bishop Ellicott, Life of Christ, p. 79, n. If it be said, the theory that the word in question was a local name for Babylonia is also opposed to the ancient versions, it is to be said, in reply, the cases are neither the same, nor similar. The strange rendering is diverse from the old, and cannot be harmonized with it. In all the old versions, some locality is denoted by their literal rendering of the phrase, and the interpretation that marks a difference in the form of *Anatole* the second time it is used, unexpressed in those versions, gives it, in that case, no sense radically different from that of the versions, or from its previous use, but only one that is more definite.

Sixth. This strange rendering seems to have come wholly from the usage as to this term in classical Greek; referring to which, it is said, "the phrase, in the

East, would require the plural." — Lange. This is the sole argument in its favor, and it seems a strong one until it is found that as to this term the usage in the Hebraized Greek dialect of Palestine was different from that of classical Greek. The word repeatedly occurs in the singular, with a local sense, in the Hebraized Greek of Josephus. His usage effectually disposes of this allegation, changing it from an argument into an erroneous assertion. This rendering is in fact a rash, unwise innovation, with nothing to commend or defend it.

In conclusion. If the interpretation herein maintained be rejected, there is no interpretation of *Anatole*, as found in the second and in the ninth verses; that is, none of the difference in the significance of the word which the Evangelist indicates by there changing its form. Each of the two forms points in the same direction, and to some region eastward of Palestine. The English, Latin, and other versions, express somewhat of this sameness of meaning by rendering each in the same way, that is, as if the word had the same form in each place; and thus do not interpret the difference between its two forms at all. The interpretation herein set forth expresses their sameness and difference, gives to each an exact meaning, and explains the change in the form, and its significance. If it be rejected, then, of that which is characteristic of the form in the second and ninth verses, of its peculiar, especial meaning, there is no interpretation; there it stands as inexplicable as the words on the palace-wall to Belshazzar.

It may be said, it is a solitary instance of such an idiom; but what does that really amount to, in this case, where we are as sure of the meaning as if there were twenty other examples of it. This may be illustrated by Genesis xiii. 1, where it is said, "Abraham went up out of Egypt into the South," which seems very much like saying, he went up out of the South into the South. As he was journeying northwards, some might conjecture that "the South" should be erased, and the North inserted in its stead. Others might search through the Hebrew Lexicon for a word that would reconcile the seeming contradiction, and whose letters are so nearly like those of the word for the South, that a careless copyist might have written one for the other — and what other critical devices might be thought of, it were hard to tell. And so, when the geography of Palestine was less minutely known than now, the matter must have rested. But when it is known that at the foot of the hill-country of Judea, between it and the desert, there is a strip of level and fertile land which is good pasture for flocks and herds when the uplands are brown and dry, it is at once probable that the herdsmen, whose homes were on the northern hills above it, gave to this plain the name of the South. Then it would be called so though approached from the opposite quarter; and by this natural hypothesis the usage is so well explained, that it is the accepted interpretation of it, and would be, were there no other verse in Hebrew Scripture to confirm it.

Why not accept a similar course of reasoning as to

St. Matthew's phrases, which undoubtedly have some geographical sense, even though his usage stood alone? But it does not really stand alone. It does so, in the very scanty remains of Palestinian, Hebraic Greek, but it is a usage whose main features all appear in the Hebrew Scriptures — in the writings of Isaiah, of Ezekiel, and in the Book of the Kings.

II.

RELATION OF THE PERSIAN AND THE HEBREW RELIGIONS.

The knowledge of the truth revealed at the beginning, and thence onward to the time when the family of the Patriarch Noah was the Human Race, was saved in one nation from its degeneracy in every other, by an inspiration through which that Truth was preserved without corruption. All other nations tried to do this, but made the Word of God of none effect through vain traditions.

These human trials prove the human need; these human failures, the divine success. Had not God, with one people, thus kept pure the knowledge of His Truth, it would not have continued free from error; for elsewhere it did not. Had He not revealed His guidance of this people, it could not have been clearly known. In the other ancient nations, error and sin hide His Truth and His Grace; in some nations less, in others more; with all so much, that the history of their Religion can only be imperfectly written; nor would this have been otherwise, had the most ample material for it, of a merely human kind, survived.

The Religion of the Hebrews was holy: they themselves were so unholy, that it might be said, their religion never was their religion. With histories of them such as those of other nations are, it would not be possible to do justice to their religion; nor would their religion, if thus known, present the contrast it does to those of other ancient nations — thoughts that might be expanded into an argument for the Inspiration of their Sacred Books.

The other nations went more on their own way. Some were, at times, recalled towards the Lord; and the illumination of His nearer presence, as in the earlier, better days of the virtue of Rome, was followed by an outshining of civilization, sooner or later darkening, as again they went farther from the Light of the World. Some were held by Him stationary on the same plane, — as the Chinese, — or were suffered to sink from it by scarcely perceptible degradation. Others were left to wander farther and farther from the eastern morning light, until the moral and spiritual distinctions between them are lost in the undistinguishing darkness of barbarism.

These things seem to have been permitted, that, as the individual learns by his errors what he would learn in no other way, so a warning experience might be wrought into the being of the human race. It seems a part of the divine plan for the Redemption of Man, to suffer many forms of departure from God, that the nations may learn that each aberration from Him is an

advance towards ruin. This seems to be the continuing history of man, which, changing its form, keeps its spirit, as heathenism changes to what is called Christianity. Yet, while He "turneth man to destruction," by giving him up to his own will, God ever saith, with even greater power of persuasion, "Return, ye children of men!"

It is written, The wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder He will restrain. This divine sufferance and restraint of Evil are parts of one plan, whose relations to each other are none the less certain, because it is impossible fully to learn how they unite in one result. If, then, the error that has usurped the place of Truth in the religions of men has been the occasion of good, much more must good have abounded from that indestructible and undestroyed Truth in them, which, in the beginning, was the gift, and afterwards the medium, of the mercy of God; — that Truth which, quickening the moral sense, and thus giving for a time a purity to the intellect, and a nobleness of purpose, was the hidden but potent cause of civilizations of old, such as that of Greece, from which ennobling influences still continue.

In trying to learn something of the religions of the world, the Bible aids us by revealing that the mercy of the Lord is over all His works; that He made of one blood all the nations of men, and determined the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord; and that in every nation, whosoever feared God, and

worked righteousness, was accepted with Him; through its outline of the early history of mankind, and through allusions to peoples other than the Hebrew: though, as to these, little is told; for the Word never speaks to gratify the pride of the human intellect.

All preceding antiquity has been very much hidden by classical antiquity, as more distant are hidden by nearer mountains. This ill-proportioned view of antiquity, which was practically restricted to Italy and Greece, is opening into a larger and wiser vision; and this is well; for classical antiquity is of modern date compared with primeval antiquity, and the reminiscences of revealed truth with the Romans and the Greeks were faint and few, compared with those of older Eastern nations.

In the primeval revelation, and so in revelation even when complete, there are only a few great truths, a few great facts, a few precepts. All the Law and the Prophets are in the two commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Sublime truths! holy precepts! — precepts of endless adaptations, and the germs of whole codes of customs and laws; truths of endless self-revealing, yet in number few. Were thought more turned to the presence of these in the religion of the classic nations, and their origin and preservation more intelligently referred to the grace of the Lord, more of the affinity of all Truth would be discerned, through a clearer perception of its community of Divine Origin.

But in Asia, rather than in Europe, the truest idea

of the religion of man is attainable. It is there history most fully bears witness to the fact revealed — that God gave to the whole human family, in its beginning, the heritage of the Truth.

Freed from their accretions of error, all the ancient religions are thus far the same. In them all are these three elements: Truth Revealed, Truth discerned by the Moral Reason, and the Grace of the Lord. To understand something of the Relations of the various forms of Religion to each other, and to Christianity, is pre-requisite to any clear idea of the history of the Redemption of man — that great purpose of God, the central truth of all history, and without which there could be no history. I propose to consider that Relation between the Persian and the Hebrew Religion, suggested by the Pilgrimage of Magi to Jerusalem.

As to this Relation, there have been three conjectures: first, that Zoroaster was taught by Hebrew Prophets; second, that several Leading Ideas of the Religion of the Hebrews, which have since become Christian doctrines, had their origin with the Persians; third, that neither religion was in any way affected by the other.

Dr. Hyde, appointed Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, in 1697, maintained, with learning and zeal, the antiquity and purity of the Persian Religion; but in his time, the means for investigating the history of Zoroaster were inadequate; and he fell into the error of giving some credence to the fable, that he was a servant of one of the Hebrew Prophets. He was exposed to

this error, because he fixed the time of Zoroaster in the reign of Darius, B. C. 521–486, — the fourth Persian monarch, the same against whose Generals the Athenians fought at Marathon.

In 1770, Anquetil Du Perron published a translation of the Zendavesta, made from manuscripts found by him in India. His brilliant discovery of these threw new light upon the Zoroastrian religion; but so great was the difficulty of accurately and thoroughly translating its old-time documents, that not until within a very few years can this be said to have been accomplished. Dr. Martin Haug, who, following Du Perron's track, went out to India, seeking the aid of the Parsees in the study of their religion, in 1862 so far completed the zealous inquiries began by other scholars, that the facts as to the Zoroastrian religion are probably, in the main, as definitely ascertained now as they ever will be; and it only remains to determine its true significance and relation to other religions of the world.

Dr. Hyde, like some other scholars since his time, was misled as to the Age of Zoroaster by some of the Greek writers, who confounded the name of Darius Hystaspes with that of a king or chief of a different epoch, who was the friend of Zoroaster. The precise date of this far earlier King, Vistaspa, cannot be ascertained; but it must have been before the conquest of all Iran by the Assyrians, which was not far from twelve hundred years before Christ. Professor Whitney places the Age of Zoroaster at least one thousand years, Spiegel two thousand years, Dr. Haug not less than

a thousand, and probably more than fifteen hundred, years before the Christian Era.

Zoroaster no more originated the religion associated with his name, than Confucius did that of the Chinese, or Elijah that of the Hebrews. He battled against idolatrous tendencies, and confirmed the belief of his people in one God. He was the Reformer, not the Author of their faith.[1] He was one of a succession of priests, who, like him, ministered before a flame of fire; and he speaks of ancient customs and words. These facts come out clearly in the few words that are indisputably his; and from them, and from the age in which he lived, it is certain that his religion can be traced back to within a few centuries of the Flood. The scene of his life was in Bactria, in the eastern part of Iran; and that he knew anything of Abraham, is in the last degree improbable; that he knew anything of Moses, is incredible; and that he was taught by one of the later Hebrew Prophets, is impossible. Yet such notions might be maintained with some plausibility,[2] so long as it was unknown that the word Zoroaster,

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[1] Dr. Haug thinks the struggle "may have lasted centuries before Zoroaster Spitama struck a death-blow at idolatry, and banished it from his native soil of Iran."

[2] Some of the Mohammedan writers report that the Magi traced their books to Abraham, whom they regarded as their prophet. The Parsee priests invented this fable to escape persecution, as only those religions were tolerated by the Mohammedans, whose sacred books connected them with Jewish Prophets acknowledged by Mohammed.

though thought by the Greeks to be the name of an individual, was a title, like that of Pope, and denoted the head of the spiritual community among the Medes and Persians.

The second opinion is as much an error as the first. The germs of all those religious ideas of the Hebrews, which have been developed into Christian doctrines, are found in their scriptures long before they knew the Persians. Such little resemblance as there may be between those ideas of the Hebrews and ideas of the Persians, is hardly more than would naturally follow from the influence of primal revelation in both nations, and from the common element of the moral Reason. None of those religious ideas of the Hebrew people came through their acquaintance with any other people, though the development of some of them may have been quickened through their intercourse with other nations, and especially with the Medes and the Persians. This is probable; but even of this there is no direct historical evidence.

A searching criticism would show that the seeming resemblance between the Hebrew and the Persian religions is sometimes superficial, sometimes deceptive, and sometimes illusive. Thus the Monotheism which, in a large and charitable construction of it, must be ascribed to the religion of the Persians, in its creed is marred by the prime error of dividing the work of creation between Ahriman and Ormazd; and subsequently by the worship of Mithra, the Sun, which is recognized in inscriptions of their Pontiff Kings, and

even in the Zendavesta itself, in its later, degenerate teachings. The resemblance between the Hebrew and the Persian idea of the Evil Spirit is deceptive. They were radically different. The plausible conjecture, acceded to by Milman, — that the figurative language of the New Testament referring to the element Light, is borrowed from the Zoroastrian religion, — is illusive.

The root of this instructive and remarkable imagery is in the sublime chapter that opens the revelation of God. There, Light is the medium through which the glory of God is revealed in the work of Creation. It is the life-giving and form-giving element. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, this element is in nature what it is in the Temple — the Shekinah of the Divine Presence. It is the mantle of the Deity. The Almighty challenges man to pierce through its mystery. Thus inspiration, giving to the Hebrews of old all, and more than all, the fulness of the modern thought, of one force in nature,[1] made this inscrutable and universal element the very breath of the presence of Him in whom all things live and move and have their being. This mysterious element is the symbol of the Creating Word of God, who, incarnate in the form of man, is the brightness of the Father's glory; that which is revealed of the presence and work of this element in the material

[1] See The Church and Science, or the Ancient Hebraic Idea of Creation. Part II. Chap. iii., The First Cycle in Creation; Chap. viii., Light representing the One Force in the Inorganic World. Andover, 1860.

creation, making it the most fitting image of Christ the Lord in the spiritual creation. When it is said in the New Testament, "In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men," it is in a revelation which commences in the very words that begin the Old, which throughout pointedly refers to the record of the Creation, and borrows this figure from it; and all the frequent language in the New Testament is conformed to this image. It is the recurrence of very similar language in the Old, — as any reader of the Bible, with merely the aid of a Concordance, can prove for himself. Does St. John speak of walking in the light? Isaiah had said, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Does St. James speak of God as "the Father of Lights"? It was written of old, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Does St. Paul say, "God dwelleth in light unapproachable"? It was written of old, "He covereth Himself with light as with a garment;" and, "He dwelleth in light." Did Christ say, "I am the Light of the world"? It was said of Him of old, "I will give Thee for a light to the Gentiles: The people that sat in darkness saw a great light: The Lord shall be thy everlasting light."

In the first frenzy of discovery in Egyptian archæology, there was a strong disposition in some, more learned than wise, to refer the origin of many of the religious ideas of the Hebrews, and most of their usages, to the Egyptians. Gradually this notion has faded out. It may now and then revisit the glimpses of the moon, when some garrulous man, or silly woman, maunders

in the tombs of Egypt; but what the traveller's dilated eyes seem to see, is the sickly ghost of an error that is dead and buried in a grave deep and secure, and where there are few mourners. So it will be with the perverse and reckless assertion of the Persian origin of any of the truths of the Christian religion.

On this subject the opinion of Dr. Haug is good authority.[1] He says, "The Zoroastrian religion exhibits even a close affinity to, or rather identity with, several important doctrines of the Mosaic religion and Christianity, such as the personality and attributes of the Devil, and the resurrection of the dead, which are both ascribed to the religion of the Magi, and are really to be found in the present scriptures of the Parsees. It is not to be ascertained whether these doctrines were borrowed by the Parsees from the Jews, or by the Jews from the Parsees: very likely neither is the case, and in both religions they seem to have sprung up independently." [2]

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[1] Bunsen, in "God in History," Book III. chap. vi. p. 292, speaks of the "important discoveries of this distinguished scholar." Bunsen himself says, in the same work, p. 284, "The myth invented by German scholars of the purely Persian origin of the Hebrew traditions, belongs to the infancy and nonage of research into the Book of Genesis — a misleading hypothesis, which ought not in decency to be mentioned, at this time of day, by any scientific man."

[2] Essays, pages 2, 3. He adds: "In the Zendavesta we meet with only two words which may be traced to the Semitic languages, neither of them referring to religious subjects. *In the later books* of the Old Testament we find several Per-

The fact is, that when the Christian mind comes to the study of the monuments of the Persian religion, it is at first struck with its seeming or real resemblance to the Hebraic and Christian systems, and the same is the case, in some measure, with other religions; but the more it compares them, the more it sees and feels their difference, until nearly all feeling or sense of the likeness is wisely lost in that of the diversity. In the study of the one there is an ever growing perception of the errors of men; in the other, of the wisdom of God.

The extreme of opinion in one direction is apt to beget an extreme of error in an opposite direction. Such may be the case with some, who, in opposition to the second, hold to the last of the three opinions before stated. This opinion grows out of the feeling that the religion of the chosen and peculiar people could not have owed anything to that of any other people; and surely, even the Persians, though not to be confounded with the heathen, were not as the Israelites, "to whom pertained the adoption, . . . and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." But as the Drama of the World unfolds in accordance with the determinate counsel of God, it can hardly be that He could have brought two nations, so highly favored of Him, into such close relations, and

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sian words, and many names; but these have nothing to do with religion. The most famous of these Persian words in the Old Testament, now spread throughout the world, is the word Paradise, which meant originally a park, a beautiful garden fenced in."

they not have put forth upon each other more or less of mutual religious influence.

The Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Roman, oppressed the people of Israel. In this they accomplished the will of God, but did so unwittingly and unwillingly. The Persian was the intelligent and willing servant of God in saving the people of Israel from destruction. He broke in pieces their chains; he restored them to Jerusalem. Well might Israel sing, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." Dream-like, indeed, the swift transition from their slavery, in the last night of Babylon, to the morning, when, bearing with it the golden vessels of the Temple, the caravan of home-returning exiles moved from the Plain of Shinar to the heights of Jerusalem! If God, "for his servant Jacob's sake," raising the Persians to the height of dominion, thus permitted them to minister to Israel in things temporal, is it inconceivable, that He may have ordained they should also minister to Israel in things that were spiritual?

It is an unquestioned opinion, that in one respect they did. The chastening of their exile brought the children of Israel nearer to their God: their restoration to Zion made them grateful to Him, and the fear and love thus strengthened in their souls tended to keep them from the apostasy of other days. But this is to be attributed, in some degree, to their witness of

the fact, that the people who had cast down the Might of the Heathen, worshipped the God of Heaven.

The lesson of Persian monotheism, dominant over the World, concurring with the Divine monitions of their history, goes far to explain why the Hebrews, after their Captivity, though the living voice of prophecy was dying away, were more firm in their faith than when Elijah confounded the priests of Baal.

If it be conceded that the belief of the Hebrews in one God was strengthened by their knowledge of the Persian religion, why must the effect of that religion upon them for good be restricted to this one doctrine? Surely, none was greater; and as to this very doctrine, the Persian religion was darkly in error. If it be said that there is no direct evidence of any influence as to any other doctrine, it is equally true as to this. There is a strong probability that it was so; and there is the same as to their belief in the Devil, in the Angelic World, and in the Resurrection. The first fact in the case is, that there was a great development of each of these doctrines in the Hebrew mind, in the five hundred years between the close of the Old Testament and the time of the New. The question is, Did their knowledge of the Persians contribute to this?

The germ of the whole Christian doctrine is in the third chapter of Genesis; and if so, of course, of its doctrine of an Evil Being, who is the Adversary of man. That chapter is in sharp contrast to the spirit and genius of the Persian idea of the creation of the world, in which was involved his idea of the origin of

evil. It follows the grandly and purely monotheistic opening of the book of Genesis, where each thing in Heaven and in Earth is the creation of one God, and each and all, again and again, is pronounced good. Into this good world evil enters in the guise of a serpent. In what follows, God will not even name the Tempter. His words, at first, seem only to and of the Serpent; and the personality of the Spirit, who through this medium wrought the Fall of man, is manifest only in the darkly luminous prophecy of enmity between his seed and the seed of the woman, and of his future destruction. Compare this with Zoroaster's conception of twin Spirits — each of them eternal, each a Creator; one of whom creates the good, and the other the evil, of the world; which is essentially the same heresy that, in a later age, God reproved in the Persian Cyrus, saying, "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things."

Or compare this chapter of Genesis with the statement of Theopompus of Chios, B. C. 300, preserved by Plutarch, that, according to the Magi, two hostile Gods ruled the earth for successive periods, each of three thousand years — a statement that substantially appears in the "Bundehesh," an authoritative collection of Zoroastrian traditions made subsequent to A. D. 226, the date of the later kingdom of the Persians, and of a concurrent revival of their nationality and religion. It will thus be seen, there was a sharp and clear difference and opposition of ideas, as to the Evil Spirit, in the

Hebrew and the Persian creeds, even from the earliest to the latest hour of the Zoroastrian religion.

It may be said, if the Persian idea of the Evil Spirit was so different from the Hebrew, and so great an error, it could not have had an influence for good on the Hebrew belief. But error is often the occasion of the development of Truth; and it is easy to see how it may have been in this case. A mysterious allusion there was to a Deliverer to come, in words of God, spoken not to man, but in the hearing of man, in the hour of his ruin, enkindling a great and sure hope, yet without distinctness of form; words of might, since spoken by the Almighty, but rather to be cherished in the musing and believing heart, than clear to the intellect. Whatever the reason why the knowledge of a Redeemer to come was veiled in the enigma of the words in which it was breathed into the soul of the Father of mankind, since this was so, there would have been no wisdom in the bringing out more clearly the existence of the Evil Spirit, the effect of whose Tempting was an ever-present evidence of his being and power. It is evidence of this, that, almost everywhere throughout the primeval world, there was a worship that is best accounted for by assuming that it grew out of a perverted reminiscence, even of this wisely reticent and guarded revelation — the worship of the Snake, the low medium of the Dark Spirit. Nor would it have become the tender mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord to the children of the dust, to have terrified them by a revelation of all that might have been made known of the power and might

of the Adversary of the Human Soul, so long as the Being who was to destroy him could not be made manifest. But the reasons for this reserve ceased when the tendency to idolatry was dead in the Hebrew mind, and was dying out in many of the nations, and the hearts of the pious in Israel were quickened to a strong and clear belief in a spiritual Redeemer, whose coming drew nigh.

In the earliest human hour, two Antagonists, whose field is the world, whose prize the Human Race, are darkly manifest. When in the fulness of time all that was then shadowed forth, and all the truths related to it, were brought to light, there were seen mighty and all-pervading influences in the Human World proceeding from beings not of flesh and blood; and Christ the Lord directing those influences of good, overruling those of evil; while, at the head of an opposing host, Satan contends, with ever less and less of consequence, against Him. The human history and the soul attest to these facts as revealed. But alike in the limitations of the knowledge of Truth, and in the guarded, gradual unfolding of it, the wisdom of God is only less adorable than in the making it known. Much of this glory, and therefore of this darkness, was hidden of old. The wisdom and mercy of God would not permit that the dominion of the Prince of this World, of the Prince of the Power of the Air, should be fully manifest, until the time of the manifestation of Him who came to destroy the works of the Devil.

The dark eminence of the Evil Spirit, in the creed of that great People with whom the relations of the

Hebrews had been so providential, was well fitted, as the right time approached for the full unfolding of the true doctrine from its germ in the third chapter of Genesis, to compel the Hebrews to search out more earnestly than ever before, and to appreciate the truth, as it was, in that ancient oracle.

Angels are known to the records of the Hebrew religion from early time; but there is a reticence as to them, like that marked before, and, it may be, having a like cause. What the Israelites had, first of all, to learn for all nations, was the truth, that the Lord God was one Lord. Too early a development among them of the knowledge of the existence of malignant beings not of flesh and blood, would have been followed by a superstitious and idolatrous worship of them, that would have come between God and his people, even more fatally than that which they borrowed from the nations around them.

The reserve as to the Evil Spirit may have a relation to this reserve as to angelic beings. If the origin and much of the presence of Evil in the earth be attributed to one Being, it is difficult not to clothe him with something like ubiquity and omnipresence, and so to make of him a god — the heresy of the Persian creed. There is something of safeguard against this in the idea of a host of evil spirits, to one of whom, as their chief, all that is done by them all is attributed; as all that was done by his million of soldiers in France, in Italy, in Egypt, in Spain, or Russia, is ascribed to Napoleon. Thus it may have been that both of these doctrines were held back, and both brought forward together.

The idea of angels, dimly conceived of by Zoroaster, was rapidly and fully developed in the Zoroastrian system — perhaps, in the providence of God, as some counteractive to its great central error; and it is very probable that, through the influence of that system, the Hebrew idea of angelic worlds, which, however, was by no means identical with the Persian, reached its fulness. This idea attains almost to certainty, when, in the Visions of Daniel, angels appear with names, — though these are pure Hebrew, — and with gradations of rank, and the nations are under their watch and ward.

The doctrine of the Resurrection had its germ in the third chapter of Genesis; for Death to the soul and the body having followed the coming of the mysterious Adversary of man, life to both will assuredly follow the coming of the mysterious Friend of man. This hope arose in the mind of the pious Israelite, as, believing to the fullest in the word and power of God, he mused on His darkly-clear language of old; and it was confirmed to him by the translation of Enoch in bodily form into the heavens, and by the like translation of the prophet Elijah. But it was a hope that had no definiteness of time or form. The Persian boldly and erroneously enlarged the primeval doctrine. He first conceived of equal gods; but, happily inconsistent in error, made one of them completely triumphant over the other, and so rushed on to the belief in his complete victory over the Grave. Little indeed he knew through Whom that victory would be won, and how! Still there was something that was right and true in his thought; and here,

as before, it is very suggestive of an influence of the Persian upon the Hebrew mind, that the first clear revelation of the Resurrection, although there are some intimations of it in other of the Prophets, is made by the Prophet Daniel.

That he taught the Persians,[1] is proved by the Pil-

[1] The belief of the Persians in the Resurrection was known to the Greeks, B. C. 300. It is in the Zendavesta. It is a logical sequence of its leading thoughts; and there was a sign of this truth in the primeval world. There seems, then, no reason for referring its origin or development among them to the Hebrews. Not so with their idea of the Sosiosh. (See page 92.) This may have had its source far back in the primeval faith. But in the *first* brief allusion to him, he is born out of the water Kacoya, and so seems a spirit or god; in the *second*, he is a man. This is remarkable, as the legend-forming current runs the other way. Thus, in the earliest part of the Zendavesta, — which, on this very account, is to be received as historical, — Zoroaster is a teacher, with nothing legendary about him. Before the end of the growth of the Zendavesta, he becomes almost a god; and many are the strange legends told of him by later Parsees — such as, after their conversion by the Arabs, the Persians told of Mahomet. A similar development would be the natural one of their idea of the Sosiosh, which, as first obscurely uttered, tends that way. Probably the change in it was wrought by the influence of Daniel, and some slight trace of a likeness to the doctrine of the Messiah thus grafted into the Zendavesta. Some of the few who can decipher that book think it older than the reign of Cyrus, judging from the language of the Achæmenian inscriptions. This must be accepted for the present. But the Magian Literature grew till Alexander's time; and sections may have been added to this book under the Achæmenian kings, though

grimage of Magi to Jerusalem. He may have learned from them. If they had any reminiscences or intuitions of truth that were more full and clear than they were, at that time, among his own people, this would have been discerned by the "man of Desires."[2] His the mind to understand, his the heart to appreciate, whatever there was of truth in the religion of Ormazd. That religion had its origin in the primeval revelation. In it there were gleams of orient light, though intermingled with gross darkness. Veins of pure water were there, though bubbling up in the wide and stagnant morass. They had no unintermitting source, no channel to keep them clean and clear of the marsh, no onward, purifying motion, like the River "the streams whereof make glad the City of God;" yet the Prophet's wand may have called forth from the morass waters to swell that River. He who saw so clearly the truth of God afar off in the ages to come, may have seen it very nigh in the souls of those among whom his lot was cast. Such truth, accredited to him by the Divine Spirit, and by it freed from all human error, he may have commended to his own people, and have made it part of the everlasting oracle of man.

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the opinion above be in the main correct. After all, the idea of the Sosiosh is so little like the clear, consistent Prophetic prevision of the Christ, that the matter is of little importance.

[2] Daniel ix. 23; x. 11. "Thou art a man of Desires," are the words of the angel to Daniel, according to the Marginal Reading in the English Bible. So, too, the Vulgate: "Vir desideriorum es." The idea seems to be — a man desirous to know all truth.

Whether he did so or not is a question of fact, to be settled, if it can be settled at all, by its appropriate evidence. As to the effect of that evidence, different minds may come to different conclusions; but the notion that it was impossible, because it would derogate from Christianity, comes from too narrow an idea of the genesis and history of our Religion.

The religion that was before the Hebrews were — that is our religion. Great truths and facts, such as the Being and Spirituality of God; such as His Creation of the Heavens and the Earth; the unity of the Human Race; the temptation by the Evil One, and the Fall of Man; the Redeemer to come; the institution of Sacrifice, with all that is implied therein; truths and facts of higher moment than the illustrations or confirmations of them in the providence of God towards the Hebrews, and which may be viewed apart from them; — these truths and facts are the substance and soul of our ancient religion, and all these were "before Abraham was."

So, too, were many holiest men. The Priest of the Most High God, the mysterious Melchizedec, to whom Abraham paid tithes, was not a Hebrew; nor was Noah, who brought the records of the church across the dissevering Flood; nor Enoch, whose translation into the Heavens intimated to the early church that the body might share in the immortality of the soul; nor Abel, whose sacrifice prefigured the sacrifice of the Lord; nor Adam, who held converse with GOD.

The Religion which built the first altar to the Living

and only GOD, and offered the first sacrifice after the Flood, embraced all then on the earth, and from them all now on the earth have sprung. That religion everywhere had an ally in the conscience; and doubtless in every nation it had allies in some who listened to the divine and the human oracle. Though perverted, corrupted, and partially forgotten, yet it may be discerned as an element in the religion of all nations — in some that have ceased to be, and in those that are: nowhere have its traces been wholly obliterated.

The Hebrews received this universal, primeval religion through Abraham. Among them it was fostered by rites and ceremonies that made them a peculiar people, even as they were, in some periods of their history, a solitary people. It was preached among them by inspired prophets and teachers. The Lord himself perfected this religion, which, before Abraham's day, he had instituted among men. He did away with all that in it was local; made that which in it was partial, complete; established that which in it was universal and everlasting; and commissioned all His people everywhere to preach throughout all the world, that this fulness of Truth by Him revealed was, and was to be forever, the Religion of mankind.

The Hebrews were chosen of GOD, as a people, to keep for us the Truth that was of old. They were chosen, that through them might be revealed the providence and government of the Lord in the earth, and their history become a parable of instruction to all nations through all time. The line of Abraham and the

house of David were chosen, that there might be prepared a family where the Holy Child, predicted from the beginning, might grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, when unto us was born the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

The truth which the Hebrews kept for us, they regarded as truth that was of old, and as truth that was for all. They alone, of all the ancient nations, faithfully remembered the three great, inseparable truths — the Unity of God, the Unity of the World, and the Unity of the Human Race. They faithfully registered the chronicle of the Dispersion of the Nations. The genealogy of their family was a branch of the genealogy of the family of man. They felt themselves at one with all the people of God, in all the ages before they were a people. The words of Moses, as his thoughts ran far back of Abraham's day, and past even the Flood, till they lost themselves in the Everlasting Days of the Beginning, are, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

The Hebrews recognized inspiration in Job; they recognized inspiration even in Balaam. The narrowness that would not recognize it anywhere was no part of the character of the Hebrews, and was abhorrent to the spirit of their religion. The First Temple was built with the friendly aid of Phœnician Tyre: at its dedication Solomon prayed for the stranger. The Second Temple was built with Persian aid: in that Temple Simeon spoke of the Lord, not only as "the glory of Israel," but as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and

of His "salvation," as "prepared for all people." St. Paul recognized an element of truth in the religion of Athens, and made the words of one of the Poets of Greece part of the Divine Oracle. St. Matthew recorded the homage to the infant Redeemer, of Sages from a foreign land. The Lord Himself said, He had sheep not of the Hebrew fold.

Down to Abraham's day, the truth in the Bible was not of Jewish origin on its human side; it was not wholly so afterwards. Job, in whose thoughts and words there is not a trace of the Law given on Mount Sinai, was not a Jew.

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